



JOSEPH FELS
HIS LIFE-WORK

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Joseph Fels - 1914

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BY MARY FELS



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JOSEPH FELS

*ENGINE and wheel and chain that clank and groan
In ceaseless factory-din thundering apace,
Ear-stunning clamour of the market-place,
And yet, amid it all, he heard the moan,
When Riches made its golden bribe his own,
And Power trumpet-called him from the throng,
And soft, luxurious Ease, with drowsy song,
He was as one not hearing—save the moan.
Half the vast world he traversed in his quests,
As Galahad for the Grail, heedless of self,
Unresting, squandering time and strength and pelf,
Followed and sought and fought—and now he rests.*

FRANK STEPHENS.

JOSEPH FELS HIS LIFE-WORK

Chapter I

Business Career and Private Life

WHY a book about Joseph Fels? Because he was an American millionaire? No, for they are already legion. Because he was so closely associated with the creation and upbuilding of a great business? Again, no, for this is the day of gigantic commercial enterprises.

My decision to write a book about my husband sprang from the fact that there came to me from many quarters urgent requests for a record of his life-work. That he was loved and respected by people of many nationalities, some of whom had never seen him, is undoubtedly true, and the reason is not difficult to understand. The possession of wealth was not the attraction; it was his love for humanity which gave him so large a place in so many hearts. It is not too much to say that, if ever a man was moved to the depths by human misery in any form, that man was Joseph Fels. He loved

the common man. This impelled him to consecrate his strength and his resources to the service of his fellows; it was this which commended him to so many, and prompted the requests for the publication of something intimate about him—requests which I felt ought not to be ignored. And so I send forth the simple story, believing that it will encourage those who knew and laboured with him, and in the hope that it will inspire others, who have the ability and means, to carry on the work.

Joseph, the fifth, and fourth surviving, child of Lazarus and Susannah Fels, was born in Halifax County, Virginia. While he was still an infant the family moved to Yanceyville, North Carolina, where they remained until Joseph was twelve.

His life as a boy was largely confined to the well-regulated activities of a conservative Jewish family, tempered by the influences characteristic of a small Southern town during the Civil War and the period of reconstruction. Yanceyville lay aside from the track of the war, and consequently the events which devastated the South and brought the resources of the North to breaking-point did not directly affect the family fortunes. Although a member of a Jewish house-

hold, the boy found most of his associates among Gentiles. A large portion of the population was coloured, and Joseph always retained a tender place in his heart for the negro race. These varied human elements in the North Carolina village, where the boy lived during his impressionable years, must have helped to shape that cosmopolitanism which was so marked a characteristic of the man in later life.

In Yanceyville, and later in Richmond, Joseph went to school, but it may be said that he profited little from his schooling. He was a mischievous boy, and there are tales of frequent conflicts with pedagogical authority; tales, too, that he did not suffer without retort the weight of pedagogical disapproval. We hear of his readiness to stand up for his rights, of his determination that neither boy nor teacher should do him injustice.

Lazarus Fels was an energetic man of good judgment and a fair measure of business ability. Although alert, he did not possess the rapid foresight which later distinguished his son. His general background of ideas was that of the time. He was too conservative by instinct to examine his beliefs, a characteristic his son did not inherit. His active industry commanded the respect of his

neighbours, and he possessed a very noticeable power of making friends. When many years later a son visited Yanceyville, where Joseph spent his early years, a number of the old residents remembered Lazarus Fels, and spoke of him in terms of high esteem.

Susannah Fels, the mother, was typical of the Jewish woman whose domestic genius would have commended her to the writer of Proverbs. An admirably efficient housewife, she rendered her husband yeoman service in the difficult days of their early sojourn in the United States. She showed a quiet courage and a determination to make possible her husband's success for which the ordinary words of praise are inadequate. It was no easy burden she had to carry, and more than forty years after her death there still remains with her children the vivid recollection of her gentleness, her refinement, and her quiet yet resolute determination. Joseph used to say in after years that it was through women such as his mother that the Jewish race had been able to endure.

In 1866 the family moved to Baltimore, where he continued his studies. Even in these early days he seems to have been endowed with a keen business sense. At fourteen he, with the aid of a younger brother, established a flourishing kite

business in a cellar. Joseph was the Managing Director, and seems to have displayed considerable ability in securing profitable trade. His stock was always ready at the right season, and repairs were efficiently carried out. That small business was already a foretaste of his commercial tendency.

By fifteen years of age he was thoroughly tired of school life. He rebelled against the constant discipline and the monotonous routine. Like so many Jews, at that age he was already a man. He felt the need of more intimate contact with life, and desired urgently the realisation of its colour and its excitement. His father, then a manufacturer of toilet-soap, gave the lad the desire of his heart to leave school and enter business, and doubtless a boy so energetic and masterful as Joe was of no small service to him. But circumstances became such as to interfere with his continuing uninterruptedly.

The business was fairly prosperous, and maintained the family in comfort; but in 1870, through causes for which he was not responsible, the father lost the business, and found it necessary to make a new beginning. It was a serious misfortune, but new plans were soon on foot.

Joseph entered the employment of a Commission Agency in Coffees, and was successful. Within

a year he and his father had accepted a position as representatives in Baltimore of a Philadelphia soap house, and a definite district was assigned to them. The connection lasted a few years and provided them a fair living. But its prospects were too limited, and in 1873 father and son felt justified in moving to Philadelphia, where they took a commission from a larger house under more favourable terms.

Still, work such as this required some subordination, and to a nature like that of Joseph Fels nothing was more galling than a sense of restraint or authority. From the very beginning it was his ambition to be master of his own career. Consequently in the autumn of 1875 he went into partnership with a Philadelphia soap manufacturer. The business was small, although it had long been established. By the end of 1876 he was in a position to buy out the partner and take over the business. In view of the dimensions of his fortune later, it is interesting to note that the purchase price was £800, and that this cheque was the largest he had ever drawn.

So was established Fels & Company. And now that he was master of his own actions he threw himself heart and soul into the work. His one thought and his one hope was to make it a success,

and it was rarely indeed in these years that he allowed his mind to deviate from this single endeavour. He travelled everywhere, his easy, confident manner and his incessant good humour making him an excellent salesman. It is safe to say that in the fifteen years from 1875 the business was never out of his mind. At home and in his office, day and night, he schemed and planned and organised. The company prospered continuously, despite keen and able competition, and from the year of its establishment never showed any decline. About the time of the formation of the new firm of Fels and Company his brother Samuel entered the business, and in 1881 was made a partner.

Competition in the manufacture of toilet soap is incessant; the salesman has also to study every shift and current of popular whim. He must have many varieties in quality, colour, perfume; he must choose pleasing wrappers, right boxes, the right advertisements. His goods must not become stereotyped, while at the same time they must always retain a sufficient identity to be borne in mind. It will be clear how great a strain all this imposes on the manufacturer. The fear of waste is continually before his eyes; he knows that a new variety may be unsuccessful,

that the wrapper may be wrong, the box insufficiently attractive, the price too high or too low. He must also be able to convince the middleman that he, and he only, has the varieties that the former requires. In no other field of industry, in fact, is the margin on the market so narrow and insecure. The young manufacturer had long been aware of these difficulties, and had perceived the wisdom of specialising on some one variety that would render unnecessary the constant attention to such a multitude of details. In 1890 it seemed to Fels and Co. that so keen a competition entailed too great a strain.

It was in the search for a speciality that Joseph came across the soap that is associated with the name of Fels. A Philadelphia company had for some time been applying the naptha process to a laundry soap; but the business was badly managed both on the manufacturing side and in salesmanship, and serious losses had been incurred. He was certain the process was an excellent one, and that it only needed patience and ability to make it a commercial success. Once so convinced, he did not hesitate. In 1893 the interests of this company were purchased by Fels & Co. Another brother, Maurice, although pursuing independent interests, was closely connected with the

business, and paid special attention to perfecting the new soap on the technical side.

At first the manufacture of the new soap was carried on coincidently with that of toilet-soap. It naturally took some time for the "Fels-Naptha" to become known, and still longer for it to become firmly established; but in two or three years the success of their experiment was certain. It had come to stay. So large was the demand for the new product that later the partners felt justified in discontinuing the manufacture of toilet-soaps and in concentrating the entire attention of the firm on the new article. A large manufacturing plant grew up in Philadelphia, efficiently equipped and organised. From this time Joseph Fels' financial success was assured.

So told, the story seems simple enough. Tireless effort and a wise patience allied to ability proved successful, as always. He was compelled in the early stages of his business career to rely upon himself; he had also to make others rely upon him, and his confidence brought him through to remarkable success. In spite of the fact that, when the occasion demanded, he could hold his own in the most hard-driven bargain, he was able to humanise all his business relations.

Such is the way in which Joseph Fels made

himself a successful business man. But in achieving financial prosperity he also shaped his own life to larger issues. Courage brought success, and success brought more courage. The mastery of difficulties strengthened an optimism which always expected the best. An open mind and daily association with men enabled him to see the evils of our present social organisation. The constant attempt to make men live to their best, as employees or business associates, showed him how to use suggestion and how to develop leadership. The facing of new problems as they arose in the building of a great business trained him in foresight and gave him confidence in his ability to judge plans not yet tried. But, meantime, Joseph Fels, the business man, was also being shaped by varied personal experiences.

Chapter II

Social and Home Life

THE year that he was twenty an event occurred which was destined to have a profound influence on all Joseph's after life. He fell in love with a girl who was still a child, and vowed himself to her service; a vow which held with growing power for the forty succeeding years of his life. To understand this event one must realise the essential romanticism of the man. With all his intense practicality, his nature was that of a dreamer. His imagination always anticipated events. His intuitions quickly became convictions, and he stood ready to risk all he had on their validity. He could never endure the oppression of suspended judgment, but decided at once and backed his decision with action.

In the year 1873 I was living with my parents, also named Fels, in Keokuk, Iowa. One day, Joseph, while pursuing his work as travelling salesman, found himself in our little town. During casual conversation with one of his customers, mention was made of the fact that a family named Fels resided there. Joseph thought that he had no relatives in that part of the country, and felt interested in seeking them out and making

their acquaintance. Upon his approach to the house on his very first call, I, then a little girl of nine, was standing in the doorway, and I ushered the stranger into the home of my parents. Here we get an illustration of Joseph's intuitiveness and decisiveness, for as he loved to tell in after years, he then and there decided that "that little girl must be my wife," and that no sacrifice would be too great to win her.

This resolution grew into a devotion which continued unabated for the following nine years. In his attitude as elder brother, and in his solicitude to assist "that little girl" in her development, there lay a dormant romanticism which ripened into love and companionship of rare tenderness and mutual inspiration, and led to our marriage in 1881.

In July of 1884 a son was born to us. In December of the same year the baby fell ill and died. It was a serious blow. Joseph had a passion for children, and this loss was irreparable. I turned to social activities and intellectual pursuits, and our home, which had hitherto been consecrated to domestic ideals and business interests, became a centre of intellectual and progressive ideas.

In this atmosphere of critical discussion Joseph's inherent radicalism began to take a more

definite shape. To our home were attracted artists, business men, dreamers, poets, socialists, and reformers of every kind. Many of these found in him quick understanding and generous sympathy; from them he came in turn to feel the irresistible charm of thinking new thoughts, dreaming new dreams, and the working towards their realisation. It is difficult to trace with any exactness his social ideas in these years. It was a period in which he was content to mitigate rather than construct. He helped people constantly. There was in him a deep emotion of philanthropy in the original sense of that word. He gave freely even when his own income was small and needed in the business; but underneath the satisfaction he felt in affording relief, there was an unshaped but imperative desire to destroy the need for giving. His mind was like an intricate mass of loose threads that needed a plan to weave them into a definite design. This plan had its beginning in his extreme individualism, his desire that each man should stand on his own feet, and make the most of his manhood. The business travels were to him a kind of education. Men were always his books; and on the road he met variety enough even for so persistent an enquirer. He was all the time probing his fellow salesmen on social

problems. He adopted little in these years, but there were few men so alert to examine.

The conservative temperament was entirely alien to him in young manhood, as in later years. There was little in the social order that commanded his reverence. Those who spoke of tradition and the ancient ways made no appeal to him. The men who awakened his interest were those who seemed to herald a change. It was not that he had any special point of contact with their social philosophy. He had simply a general sympathy with their vague flavour of modernity. "They were trying," as he once said, "to understand themselves, without any of the damned nonsense of trying to understand their grand-fathers."

Joseph had never been strongly drawn to the service of the synagogue. He respected it as a conservator of a magnificent tradition, but it seemed to him a force for the maintenance of dogma. What he wanted, what his nature needed, was a religion of humanity, one that stood apart from race and class, from creed and time, and asserted the brotherhood of man. For a short time he was a member of the Ethical Society, but his religion was not a matter of institutions, and throughout his life his friends were chosen regard-

less of creed or race. He was a man, and in every other man he saw a brother.

No one who would understand the life of Joseph Fels can afford to neglect what he gained from his experience in business. His shrewd practicality was everywhere evident in what he later undertook in political affairs. He was anxious to prevent misdirected energy. He was angered at the waste of things, particularly the waste of Nature's resources, acutely conscious that this, more than anything else, lies at the bottom of human misery. He was always talking of the things lying idle that might be used; this was the keynote of his public activity. He believed that exactly the same kind of talent which was applied to the direction of private enterprise could be successfully applied to the conduct of national affairs.

He knew that the success of a great business depends upon making it appeal to the imagination of the crowd. It was by such methods, in addition to the soap's inherent qualities, that the Fels-Naptha success had been built up. An eloquent claim had been skilfully and picturesquely made. People had been interested in the claim; they had bought the new product and had been satisfied in the testing. Not otherwise did he conceive that great political movements should be carried on.

He wanted to capture the popular imagination. "All great movements," he would have said with Disraeli, "spring from the passions." It is the stimulated prejudice, a judgment before thought, that sets the minds of men to work in common. This point of view, he held, was equally valuable to a man who wishes to sell a commodity as to a reformer who wishes to change social conditions.

Joseph's instincts were all profoundly democratic, but there can be no doubt that his constant association with working people, through his factory and through his business relations, served to strengthen and perfect his belief in human equality. With his own workers he lived on the frankest terms of good-fellowship. Their lives were their own, and he always looked with suspicion upon attempts to regulate the social life of working people. It was his duty, and it was also, as he frequently explained, to his advantage, to provide for their physical comfort, and to pay them, as he put it, "the best wage that he could screw up his courage to give them." He had no sympathy with the policy of drive; he did not believe in making the worker the accessory of the machine. He treated him as an equal, but insisted that the employee should recognise his responsi-

bility, and he won his reward. His men felt it was worth while to work for a firm which was no corporate fiction, but a living group of men who had regard for the bodies and souls of those with whom they came in contact.

By 1895 Joseph's business career had achieved a solution of its most pressing problems and had opened the road to undoubted success. The varied associations of "the road" and home, the close contact with men and sharp clash with their opinions, had served in the work of shaping and maturing his character. That year may, therefore, be regarded as the point at which the formative elements in his life gathered themselves into an instrumentality which could be consciously used towards the constructive work of the world. This new period quickly asserted itself in a definite product.

One of the circumstances most commonly attendant upon the private exploitation of land values is the existence in every town and city of vacant spaces not intended for use, but held in anticipation of increased prices. These plots, usually acquired with old buildings, show in most cases the results of house-wrecking activities, and the public often tolerates an unsightly rubbish heap or unspeakable hoardings on

main thoroughfares, side by side with the best results of public improvement. Though economically and æsthetically undesirable, the speculator may hold them as long as he likes, safely protected by the rule that private property is inviolable. It is the same everywhere. It is many years since Governor Pingree, of Michigan, for example, seeing the multitude of unsightly vacant spaces in the City of Detroit, originated the plan of securing their temporary use for gardening purposes. Potatoes were produced by the poor of Detroit on vacant building land, and thus "Pingree's potato patch" became famous. Joseph was struck by the applicability of the plan to his own City of Philadelphia.

The Philadelphia Vacant Land Cultivation Society began in the most modest way with a meeting of a few business men and social workers in the City, and a committee was formed to start the experiment. A few landowners were found willing to lend their unoccupied sites to be cultivated by working men with a taste for gardening. The plan was advertised; and applicants from the first were more numerous than was anticipated. Once started, this Society has never looked back, and has grown steadily in strength and usefulness. Similar organisations for the cultivation of vacant

lots were also established in Chicago, Cleveland, and New York.

Even in its tenth year, with an income of only £260, the Philadelphia Society was able to provide gardens for 800 families, representing approximately 4,000 men, women and children, who produced vegetables to the value of \$10,400 (£2,080). That is to say, every shilling subscribed produced an eight-fold return in food-stuffs. Many of the workers employed on these vacant lots were able, after providing themselves and their families with vegetables for their own consumption, to sell the surplus and thus earn a little ready money. Work was found for the unemployed in preparing land for allotment holders, and later many of the unemployed themselves took allotments. As soon as the funds of the society permitted, the workers were instructed and guided by an experienced superintendent.

These results, it must be remembered, were obtained not from rich soil, but from old, unused building sites locally regarded as eyesores and dumping grounds. The workers, too, were for the most part people without previous agricultural or gardening knowledge, who were recruited at random from the working-class population of Philadelphia. To the material benefit which the

cultivation of these vacant lots brought to the people who worked them must be added the blessing of improved health, together with restored manhood and new possibilities of life. "How many men," Mr. Fels once said in a meeting of the society, "have we lost simply through lack of the medicine nature provides, fresh air and vigorous exercise?" The educational value of this work was seen in the establishment of school gardens, which with his eager encouragement were usually made a feature of the scheme.

These experiments meant much in Joseph's life. They gave point and direction to certain ideas which had for some years been uppermost in his mind. He had always been impressed by the possibilities inherent in the cultivation of the land. He had before this helped men, broken by the struggle of life in the city, to establish themselves as farmers. The experiment with the City lots had shown that there was a real hunger for the land; the society from the start had always more applicants than it could supply. Meantime there was no dearth of land. There was no scarcity even of unused land. There was almost a plethora of land deliberately withheld from cultivation or from other improvements, merely

for the purposes of speculation. At that time only the problem existed for him. He had probably no kind of solution to suggest for it; but the experience must undoubtedly have exercised no small influence on his mind.

Chapter III

Personal Traits

THE story of the life-work of Joseph Fels cannot be told without an attempt to picture the man to the reader.

In stature he was short, five feet two, but so well proportioned that he never seemed small.

On his way home from business, he could be seen daily turning the corner of the street and covering the short intervening space with quick, decisive steps, his head turned slightly and a tendency to sway a bit to the left in walking. In his left hand he carried a small dispatch-case filled with letters, and under his right arm he invariably carried a mass of papers. While he walked he took out his door key, and the door was opened almost without stopping. Once in the hall, he laid all his things on the table, hung up his coat and hat, cleared his throat, and ran up the stairs to his study. A cheery "Howdy" to everyone, a quick peck of a kiss (after humorously rubbing his mouth with his coat sleeve) for every woman in the room—his wife he kissed with infinite tenderness—a pretended fight with the little boys if any were around, had the effect of clearing the room of any dead air or thoughts—and you have

his entrance into the place where he lived. If it is near the dinner-hour he tells you he is starved. He ate in moderation, and the simplest table was always a sumptuous one to him. If urged to take more of something he liked he would say, "Lordy, son, there's no room, but I'll take a little to fill in the cracks." If he came late, as he did sometimes, his shy manner sent everyone eagerly hurrying to wait on him.

Joseph was a restless spirit, and could never sit quiet. If there was reading aloud he would write letters at the desk; if there was talk he would stand with his back to the fire or walk around the room. This cheerful, alert, joyous nature that loved to sing snatches of parodies or to quote "The bigger the rabbit the more whiter his tail," could sometimes swing to the other extreme and bring into the room, or into the hearts of those who loved him a gloom that was like the blackness of night. Then he scarcely ate, his smile was forced, and when he conquered these depressions he came out of them tired, with a quiet sadness that finally merged into his usual sunny courageous nature.

Just as there were two sides to his disposition so there were two sides in his reaction to people. He spared nothing of time, money or generous

judgment in helping individuals. On the other hand, if he felt a lack in a friend's attitude toward him or toward the cause for which he worked he was so keenly hurt that no amount of reasoning could disperse it. In business relations he liked to feel out his man, often holding him up in some deal to the penny, and then turning around and giving the man, as a friend, much of everything he had to give. He always wanted to avoid killing the divine spark in any human being. One morning a friend, after having fed a succession of tramps, said to one, "I will give you your breakfast, but you must promise not to tell any of your friends about it." Joseph overheard the admonition, and, looking up timidly, ventured, "How can you ask him to keep from his friends the one thing he could be generous enough to share?"

This two-sided nature manifested itself in many small acts. He had a mischievous boy's attitude in watching a dog chase a cat, and quite enjoyed the perilous situation of the cat. On the other hand, when as happened one evening he came home very late to dinner with no excuse, it was found that he had taken a little dog to a friend and had spent an hour in the east side of London finding milk and making the dog comfortable for

the night. Again, when a little five-year-old friend was ordered to ride on account of illness, he started off at a brisk walk to the home of a neighbour he didn't know, and bought a donkey. How did he know there was a donkey there for sale? The touching part of this story is that as Joseph came across the fields leading the donkey, followed by a tiny new-born one, he was greeted by shouts of laughter and asked, "But why did you buy two?" With a twinkle of his brown eyes and an attempt at raillery, but with a seriousness that refused to be hidden, he said, "I couldn't separate the mother and baby, and so I bought them both."

His love for children was almost a passion, and in his heart he really adopted many a lad. For the son* of an Edinburgh friend he had a deep affection, and of him he wrote, "I never before wanted to steal a sixteen-year-old boy until this one came along. It is a pleasure to look at the great, stout, manly lad." When another friend named a son after him he was deeply touched. And while his love for the other children of the same family was equally strong, there was a

* This was Alistair Geddes, the son of Patrick Geddes. He was killed on the battlefield in France.

peculiar quality in his affection for this child. The following is a letter to him:—

London, October 1, 1907.

Dear Joseph B——,

Here's to you, my jolly little chap, and may your shadows be few with untold quantities of sunshine always on tap for at least a century. You are here, my little lad, to be rubbed and scrubbed a few short baby years, to be petted and kissed and thrashed. . . . Then you'll be chucked on to your own responsibilities, and you'll have to stand and take your lickings along with the pettings of a more or less careless world. . . .

And, dear little boy, you've got my name as part of yours. You are beginning its use. I've got a considerable distance on the way to finishing with it, so take care that you are good to Joseph and love people. Just love 'em as much as I do.

Your

UNCLE JOE.

*

*

*

In the Fels family there were seven children, Abraham, Barbara, Bettie, Joseph, Maurice, Samuel and Rosena. With his two unmarried sisters, Barbara and Rosena, and his brother Maurice, Joseph spent a great deal of his time. For them he had a deep affection, and when in Philadelphia he would allow nothing to prevent

his spending his Friday evenings with them. During the last seven years of his life he passed the months of his stay in America in the home of his friend Earl Barnes. There he felt that he received peculiar stimulation to thought and action along the lines he was so devotedly following.

The scope and multiplicity of his activities, which included the management of more than a score of business enterprises, participation in, and often the responsible direction of, many social and political movements, were made possible through the skill and tireless energy of Walter Coates, who, through twenty years of public and private work, was his close companion and devoted friend.

For one to think that Joseph took up the work of shaping the social mind to the doctrines of Single Tax easily and lightly is a mistake. No one ever put more labour, more heartache, or more courage into preparing himself for propagandist work. Not trained to speak and coming to it late in life, he found it, indeed, uphill work. He was never unconscious of the struggle before him to influence opinion through personal appeal; he took it seriously but with a humorous sense of his dependence upon others for help. In writing to a friend who had many times given him assistance, he said, "The Lord knows how I wish you were

here. I want you, 'ma honey,' and I want you bad; the wherefore at this particular juncture being that I am invited to talk to a meeting about farm colonies and small holdings to be convened by the Lord Provost at Glasgow Friday of next week. I will press Mollie and Walt into service, though they are just common garden folk. They can't help me to lie with the same smoothness of diction as you."

The strength of his personality was his naïve unconsciousness. His emotions were those of a child. Criticism hurt him only when it was personal. It usually stirred the fight in him, and in wordy conflicts he was rarely unsuccessful because he was fortified by an idea. His egoism was a delight to those who were big enough to understand him; it was simply the honesty of the child nature of the man. His was a natural reaction to the forces with which the conventional world brought him into conflict. To those most intimately connected with him credit must be given for affording free play to his striking personality. His little mannerisms in speech, whether merely ungrammatical or verging on explosive abuse, were by-products of his nature, and were not tampered with by those who practised correct grammar and elegant diction. He was surrounded

by friends who appreciated and loved his individual traits as parts of a big personality. He was not the kind of man who could be made over into the polite, urbane, self-effacing man who operates from behind breastworks. He was dynamic, out in the open, fighting with every emotion that caught him, but always with a heart tender, true, and direct.

One night at the dinner table a lady, a stranger to him, in describing someone, said, "He is not of our kind." Joseph had not, up to that moment, taken part in the conversation, but from the other end of a long table he quietly inquired, "Isn't everyone of our kind?" It is creditable to the woman that this gentle rebuff made her his friend. Totally unconscious of convention, he cut straight through to the hearts of people. One cannot treat humanity as he did without often causing embarrassment to those who are near and dear. If he conversed with the butler at his friend's dinner table it was because he felt intuitively that he was doing that man an injustice in being served by him, and unconsciously he tried to undo this injustice by talking with him on terms of equality. Even when giving directions to those serving him he would do it with almost an air of apology, often adding, "if you don't mind."

When on a visit to Denmark he heard that the Crown Prince was interested in land reform; he therefore endeavoured to secure an interview. Owing to the red tape of the Chamberlain's office he did not succeed. But fate threw them both on the same ferry-boat when he was leaving Copenhagen. Seeing the Crown Prince on the deck surrounded by those in attendance, Joseph, not thinking of himself either brazenly or modestly, but thinking only of the work to help humanity, and knowing that the Prince had expressed an interest in that work, left his own group, walked straight through the royal party up to the Crown Prince, held out his hand, and with a smile so winning that no one could see it and be unmoved, said, "How do you do? I sent you a letter requesting the favour of an interview, but have not received any reply. I am Joseph Fels, interested in bringing the land and the people together." Amazement on the part of some of his own friends, which, of course, knowing him so well I did not share, consternation and surprise on the part of the Crown Prince's suite, had no effect on either. Man met man, and those who knew Joseph were glad that the Crown Prince rose to his level, held out his hand, walked away with him for a two hours' conversation on problems

bigger than the breaking of conventional forms.

* * *

Mr. George Lansbury, who was so intimately associated with him, gives an interesting illustration of the influence he exercised over others; he says :—

“ I met Joseph Fels in the summer of 1903. He came to my house like a breath of fresh air, his transparent honesty of purpose, his love of humanity, were clear and manifest to all. I had heard very little of him, and confess I was somewhat prejudiced against him because he was a rich American. Five minutes' talk with him dispelled my doubts and fears, and we then commenced a close and intimate friendship that will never really end. He made me realise as never before that it was worth while to struggle and fight for great causes, and inspired me with faith in my fellows. Especially did he make me realise how much the future depends upon the efforts of individual men and women.

“ My young manhood had been spent among the Social Democrats, and I had come to believe it was almost impossible for a rich man or woman to be sincere in their professed desires to espouse

the cause of the toiling masses. Joseph Fels broke down this prejudice, for here he was, asking nothing, seeking nothing but the opportunity to serve, and all the time wanting to stand, not in the limelight, but in the background. During my whole connection with him we never 'fell out' about anything. We did at times disagree about non-essentials, but we were united on the things that really matter.

"He was a Jew, not orthodox; I was a Churchman, yet, somehow, we understood that in our religion there was neither Jew nor Gentile but simply men and women. Although he would never admit it in my sense, I shall ever think of him as the finest example of a Christian I have ever known. He was a simple, kindly, loving soul, and I experienced at his hands all that comes from fellowship with such a character. He poured out money like water on schemes which I put before him, and never hesitated to help anyone who needed assistance although he hated what is termed 'Charity.' Yet he was full of charity in the sense that true charity typifies love. He gave not only money, which was comparatively easy, but gave himself, and that was his great charm for me.

"When I first went to the home his wife and he had made at Bickley, in Kent, it seemed like a new

world; a world from which all the cheap and nasty things of life had been banished, where the outstanding thought of each was how to serve God by serving man. Before my wife and I met him we had seldom visited the homes of very rich persons, but a visit to 'Elmwood' was to us just like going home. This experience was not ours only, it was that of all who visited them. How could it be otherwise? The first thing the visitor saw when crossing the threshold was the words on the panel of the door:—

What I spent I had!

What I saved I lost!

What I gave I have!

“Both Joseph and Mary Fels did their best to live up to this creed. Business and money-making must have compelled much of his attention, but it never entered into his conversation round their table, or by their fireside. Usually we just talked of how the lot of the toiling masses might be brightened and bettered. Our talks ranged from Single Tax and Anarchy, to Landlordism and Bureaucracy. To listen to him was like listening to one who had seen a great light, to one for whom the small and mean things of life had no meaning. The freeing of land did not mean simply more potatoes or more strawberries, to him it represented

the means by which the whole human race could be made free. Consequently it was for him a great inspiration to enable him to spend himself, as well as his money, ungrudgingly.

“People who did not know him cannot realise his personal magnetism, and how little self-consciousness there was in his make-up. I have been in his company under varying circumstances; when interviewing Cabinet Ministers, Bishops, Boards of Guardians and Town Councils. At all times he was the same—keen, full of enthusiasm, and dominated by the grand ideal that all men and women might be happy, and have enough, simply by determining to do justice to each other. Sometimes clever people thought he was simply a well-meaning crank, but they soon found that they were dealing with a man who had a reason for the faith that was in him.

“In the purchase of the Hollesley Bay Estate, with its £30,000 risk, and also the purchase of the Laindon Estate, his one anxiety was to prevent the appearance of personal advertisement. It was therefore impossible not to see that he was a public-spirited man acting for others' good.

“His persistence was wonderful. I often thought this was the secret of his success in life, he could not be beaten. When told that Boards of

Guardians were difficult to deal with, he asked to see them, and he seldom left them without having won them to his view. When we talked to him of the ignorance of social conditions, of the hidebound obstinacy of Government Departments, and of their objection to dealing with pressing social problems, he was not discouraged. He just, so to speak, went and sat on the step of the Local Government Board Offices until first Colonel Lockwood, then Mr. Walter Long, and afterwards Mr. Gerald Balfour, were won over to his side. When at times landlords refused to loan vacant land for cultivation in connection with the society he had formed for this purpose, he never accepted the refusal as final. Personally, I felt when he passed on that I had lost a friend and a brother. All I owe to him it is impossible to say or put on record, or the proofs of love he showered upon my wife and myself.

“One great joy in our lives was our journey to America with Joseph and Mary Fels. We had often talked of going, and at last, a few months before he passed from us, the opportunity came. That journey was a further revelation of his loving care and forethought. A fine memory also is that of the meeting he addressed in the great saloon of the steamship where he expounded his social and

religious faith. I had been accustomed to meetings of all kinds for many years, but here was an unusual gathering of millionaires and multi-millionaires, together with their wives and daughters, all gathered to listen to one of their own class telling them the truth in plain language. He made us all, rich and poor alike, feel very small indeed, for his words rang so true. When he invited those present to put questions to him regarding his statements we were, so to speak, all struck dumb. We wanted to go away and quietly think.

“ While we were in America he cleared away all kinds of obstacles and made it easy for me to meet literary people, politicians, and leaders of thought, and in a thousand ways served us in a manner we shall never forget.

“ My wife and I said ‘ good-bye ’ to him rather sadly at the great station of the Pennsylvania Railway. We were both so strong and so big, compared with him. There was a look in his eyes which somehow made us feel we were parting with a great big loving brother, and as we parted there came over us ‘ a something ’ we shall never be able to define. It seemed to be a parting different from any previous parting, and when, a few weeks later, we heard that he was ill, and, in a day or two, of his passing on, our thoughts flew back to that

railway station and the far-away look in his eyes.

“Now that he has gone away we are all the poorer. His inspiring presence is no longer with us, but there is with us, for all time, the memory and influence of his loving personality, and, therefore, he can never die.

“‘His is the glory of going on.’ For his work is written large on the public life of America and Europe; it is also written deeply in the lives of hundreds of men and women who, like myself, were privileged to know him. It is for us who were thus privileged to take up and press forward his work, which, when he laid it down, he entrusted to his wife, and which she has so bravely made her work too. We must help her to carry it forward to a successful issue.

“The European war to some extent turned men’s minds from social questions, but it has made us understand how vital and permanent the land question is, how great a part it will play in the question of peace. Now that peace has come, men’s minds naturally turn to the land which they and theirs, have fought and died for, and the slogan cry of ‘The land for the people’ is again heard.

“All of us then who wish to raise a lasting tribute to the memory of our dear friend must do

our utmost to see that the next British Campaign is one that will achieve permanent good, and result in the passage through Parliament of a measure securing to the people, all the people, the entire land values which they, the people, have created."

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The following is an interesting description, written by Miss Margaret McMillan, of a visit Joseph paid to Oxford, and a speech he delivered at Balliol College. It was a dramatic moment in which the most progressive of moderns stated his case in the home and atmosphere of age-long conservatism. Miss McMillan says:—

"He arrived in a motor car—an eager, imperious little man in a soft felt hat and rather worn overcoat. But I did not see the arrival, and caught my first glimpse of him at the end of shadowy cloisters, and in a soft cool twilight that seemed remote indeed from the outer street in the heat of late August noon.

"Dim was the old College, and peopled with shades. Here walked the dead: luminous-eyed men who wrote saintly hymns, scholars and statesmen and at least one immortal poet. The winding corridors and stairs, the doorways with their worn

steps, and the long aisles under heavy roofs of darkened stone, were haunted by these. And what stillness everywhere, a busy kind of hush as if the air was full of mysteries.

“Suddenly at the end of a corridor the small, eager figure of Joseph Fels appeared, his coat swinging wide, his soft hat drawn down over his face with a defiant tilt. It was a surprise. For though it was known that he was coming to address the summer students of the University Extension Movement, the news had not reached me. Few of the men and women now busy and happy with their tutors knew anything of Joseph Fels, save that he was a rich man who spent his money freely in rather unusual ways. Later they would gather for tea in the grounds of Balliol College and hear what he had to say.

“Still, Oxford is hospitable in its way. Who would not wish to do the honours of such a place as this world-famed centre of life and learning? A young undergraduate chaperoned the guest. We walked through many halls, went into the vast kitchens of Wolsey's College, looked down Addison's Walk and peered into stately rooms hung with portraits, and smaller chambers where the great ones of the world had lived. As the sun sank low in the west we went back to the grounds of

Balliol College, where the ghosts gave place to the work-a-day life of the world.

“A large number of men and women were gathered from every part of England. They represented almost every class—engineers, wagon-makers, factory hands from Lancashire, ‘waivers’ from Bradford, arsenal workers, and at least one navvy. Casual labourers too, railway men, clerks, one or two titled women, and mingled with these, scholars, tutors, and literary stars. A brilliant young leader writer of the *Morning Post*, an Archbishop’s son in a ‘blazer’ and one dean of College. A very motley gathering, certainly. It included some of the best of England’s scholars and leaders of thought. There was also a sprinkling of elementary school teachers. A clever, robust-looking Yorkshire mill-girl who wrote very good essays sat in the foreground with a group of her girl friends, talking to a brilliant young tutor.

“The little American was the focus of all attention and interest for a moment as he came in, his face pale, with the strange pallor of the East. His manner was nervous, though rather jocular, for he was not at all unconscious of the elements of power as well as prestige in the men and women before him, as well as of the historic site. As he took off his hat he showed a typically Jewish head,

wide and rounded. Time and again that figure has appeared in gatherings at critical moments. Modern? No. The old colleges were modern now. He stood in the midst of the big crowd scattered around the lawn and on the slopes, under the dark walls, the type of the wandering race that has suffered in many lands ere there was any thought of Balliol College, and had heard the law given on Sinai.

"Everyone expected him to be modern, however. The chairman introduced him briefly as an American, a business man who lived in England during part of every year, and announced his subject (though everyone knew it and smiled a little over it) as 'The Land.' 'You're quite right there,' said Mr. Fels, 'I've only one subject, I've only one lecture. The Gospel isn't long, it's short. But you can say it over a great many times without getting to the end of it. Yes, I'm going to talk to you about the land—this earth you're standing on. Who does it belong to? Who made it? Who's got a right to it? That's what I am going to talk about here, that's what I am talking about all the time.'

"The whole company looked a little bored, a little amused. The smart factory girl smiled, becoming conscious of the speaker's deficiencies,

his accent, and his unceremonious way of speaking. The students in the Economics classes (there were a great many of them) fresh from their books turned to the living page of a man's face. Did they read well? A chill wind went round the whole assembly. Very courteous and intent were the Balliol men's faces. Did *they* understand? Who knows? I cannot tell. A great many young students thought they knew what their teachers were thinking, and threw them half-apologetic and deferential glances. The Jew, under his well-defined surface manners, was perfectly conscious of all this and it angered him. He began to speak rapidly, with new emphasis. He also used the unscholarly word 'damn.' The Yorkshire girl, fresh from studies that rendered her a little intolerant, could hardly hide her indignation. Then suddenly the speaker, fighting thus for a moment with his audience, appeared to transfer his scene of operations. It was as if a rider dragged at his horse's heels vaulted into the saddle. He got hold of the reins of his own anger, his own ruffled temper. He vaulted into a new attitude and found his place. All was shown somehow at once in his face, in his voice, which lost its fretted tones, and very soon, in his speech. 'Learning itself—I make claim to none and am an ignorant

man by comparison with many of you—must flourish best at last on a soil that is free from evil undergrowths. But are these conditions secured here or even in new countries? You know very well that the poor come to these colleges only by reason of an agitation raised in very modern days, and even now by the will of those who have secured every privilege by the initial privilege of land-owning. Below every movement that calls itself progressive but puts off the consideration of the evil of private monopoly in land values, there is a moral evil that poisons everything. To postpone the removal of this is to postpone every other reform or vitiate it. Yes, this is what I have come here to say.’ He paused for a moment, and a look of infinite gentleness, sympathy and humility came to his face.

“The audience was graver now though a movement of resentment flowed into it.

“Now the voice gathered strength, but it was a new kind of strength. Ever more detached, it seemed yet nearer and more intimate. It took no account of the differences of those before him, still less of their feeling or relation to him. Where now, was the rich man, the millionaire? Through the calm, sun-bathed space between the college walls, and over the green shaven mound, it rose

and fell—the Voice as of one crying in the wilderness. ‘Begin your work by an act of justice—the simplest justice. Give back the earth to your brother. Then your light shall come forth like the morning.’ Ah! here was the Jew again touching the perfect chord. He *had* touched it. The new John the Baptist was here. With passionate faith, in perfect self-surrender, in quiet acceptance of all labour and loss and all suffering, and with a hope that bore up the soul to fair and cloudless heights, it beat against every heart. And when the speaker ended at last—falling back in his rôle of diffident, half-jocular millionaire philanthropist, as suddenly as a bird falls into its nest on the earth, there was deep silence for a moment, a silence far more charged with meaning than was the so-called debate that followed. Looking spent, and very white and small he sat down.

“Did one hear that Voice again? Yes, indeed, though not on that day nor for a few months later. In the evening, he was, I remember, a little subdued, and had nothing to say about the University, nothing about his critics and antagonists in the debate. Nothing.

“But I did hear the Voice again. It was after the news came of his death in Philadelphia. They say he was carried into a great hall and lay in the

midst of a great multitude. Many wept, and they praised him. Love was round him in death like a sun-lit sea about a broken raft. Silent he lay, yet not silent. Again we saw the dim cloisters, the smooth lawn of Balliol, and the modern students of many social orders. And his words rang out now, but like a strain of music. Strong words and brave, words that will not die, nor be forgotten. For they tell of that which abides amid all passing shadows, of something that does not yield to doubt, or fear, or earthly powers, and which, however baffled or delayed, cannot fail at last."

Chapter IV

Public Career and Social Principles

IN 1901 it became desirable for Joseph to go to England to work up a branch of the business. For two or three years after his arrival he, with his close co-worker, Walter Coates, devoted his energies to the establishment of this branch. Owing to the keen competition and the general difficulty of securing custom, this work was for a time very arduous and required close and exclusive attention. In the course of a few years, however, the business became plainer sailing and he gradually relinquished the direction to Mr. Coates. During the last ten years of his life he gave only very occasional supervision to the conduct of business affairs.

Constituted as he was with ready sympathy for the oppressed and needy, combined with completely democratic conceptions, he was inevitably drawn into participation in public affairs and the kind of work that is generally described as social reform.

To understand clearly the direction of his interest and activities, it is necessary to review briefly the chief features of the situation in Great Britain during the opening years of the century.

The conclusion of the Boer War had left the British public with some serious practical problems and many grounds for discontent. The national conscience was already beginning to react after its somewhat extreme commitment to ideals of imperialistic enterprise. The war and the years immediately following disclosed to England many ugly conditions within her borders. She began to feel it necessary to be for a time, at any rate, a "little England" and to put in order some of the pressing affairs of her own household. With the trade depression that supervened, the problem of unemployment, acute at the time when the army returned from South Africa, began to assume portentous dimensions. From 1905 to 1908, the country was faced with a condition in its labour market that was truly appalling. Administrators seemed to have a dearth of means, and a greater dearth of ideas for dealing with the situation. Local resources were wholly inadequate, whether for relief or the provision of temporary relief works.

It appeared as if the country could not expand its trade to the point of absorbing the enormous labour surplus, or shoulder the terrible burden that began to fall upon its machinery for relief. Processions of the workless and hungry were for

a time almost daily upon the streets of the principal cities demanding work. The nation was, in short, having to pay the penalty of modern industrialism—millions of factory-trained and habituated workmen, always sufficiently numerous to ensure low wages in the best of times, and doomed, with the cyclical recurrence of depression, to unemployment and privation.

Added to this state of affairs was the more than disquieting realisation of national deterioration. The small percentage of recruits found acceptable for service abroad came as a shock to those who had previously taken for granted the superior quality of the nation's physique. Overcrowded and unhealthy urban districts where the workers had their homes, the cramped and mechanical nature of their occupations, the general disregard for life and health accorded the wage-earning population, and the lack of means of subsistence, had been found to have reached their natural consequence in a proletariat rapidly deteriorating in fitness. Nothing short of a national crisis ever makes the Englishman clearly recognise a defect in the national life, but it came home with striking force in the years following the Boer War. Every student of economic and social affairs, every reformer and

even every politician, found his attention absorbed by these crying questions, unemployment and general deterioration. To put the matter briefly, the problem of the social reformer ten years ago was to ameliorate the condition of a huge population of industrial workers, with precarious and scanty means of subsistence, who were rapidly becoming degenerate, through the evil effects of factory life and city slum.

The means then adopted for meeting the stress created by unemployment were naturally conditioned by the circumstances of the time. Lack of Government foresight was responsible for the failure to provide for such a contingency. Hasty endeavours were made to set up public relief works to absorb a portion of the surplus labour. But these efforts proved as inefficient as they were costly. Local efforts were aided by grants made by the Government, and were administered, in London, by the Central Unemployed Fund, which was established in 1904. Certain general works were carried out by this Committee, upon which representatives of various public bodies were selected to serve. In addition, a rudimentary kind of labour exchange activity was initiated to meet the needs of such employers as required workers.

These palliatives effected only a small fraction of the relief demanded. An important principle, however, was established, namely, that the Government should, in times of trade depression, become an employer for the purpose of utilising the labour surplus; a principle which later received application in the Development Act. The establishment of labour exchanges operative throughout the country, in the endeavour to equalise the demand upon the labour market, was a further contribution to the solution of the problem.

On the whole something has been done legislatively since then to improve the general conditions of the worker. With increasingly efficient inspection of factory and of home, with workmen's compensation, and latterly, with sick and unemployed benefits provided under the National Insurance Act, it may be argued that Britain is on her way to establishing for the labouring population a set of more tolerable conditions of life. For the problem of unemployment, however, little has been, or can be, achieved so long as land monopoly exists.

Knowledge was not lacking during those years in which unemployment mounted to the highest point of its curve and gradually descended to its

normal, of the one great remedy which is adequate to cure the greatest of economic diseases. Those whose prevision reaches beyond the screen of temporary prosperity have been well aware that the national life of Britain, as of other countries, can only conserve itself by an agriculture which grows concomitantly with, and balances, industry. It has remained for Professor Ashley, himself one of the greatest of commercial experts, to show the vital necessity of this relation, and for a great war to bring home the fact that it is a serious matter for a great nation to neglect the tillage of the soil.

The "back to the land" cry, however, has made itself heard for nearly a generation. Social reformers in England have for many years contemplated with envy the rural development of Continental countries, the conservation of a strong and resourceful peasantry, the evolution of intensive culture with skilful and scientific methods of tillage, the spectacle of nations that in emergency would be self-supporting. Increasing alarm has been felt that the population of England should be dragged from its last roots in the soil and placed in the urban and industrial atmosphere to wither and decay. The small holders of Denmark, Belgium, and France undoubtedly constitute an

element of national strength that is lacking in England. Great wealth certainly belongs to an industrial nation with a world's trade, but is a doubtful compensation for the drain on human quality, when this industrial system finds itself in normal times with a surplus of workers, which at recurring intervals increases to the point of being an alarming problem.

An industrial proletariat has seemingly become a part of the order of things. Consciously or unconsciously many employers of labour aid that conspiracy of circumstances which has made Britain urban and industrial. They accept the erroneous view that high profits naturally derive from low wages, and, as the scale of wages is determined more or less by the state of the labour market, the tendency is inevitably to that low wage limit which just prevents starvation. So long as this view is accepted it is in the interests of payers of low wages to depopulate the rural districts and herd the population in cities, to provide manual training for children and technical education for youth, to make it, if possible, less profitable to cultivate the soil, and, in addition, easier to secure possession for members of their own class of large sections of land for merely residential and sporting purposes. Wise employers, however, are begin-

ning to see that high profits more naturally derive from high wages, plus efficient organisation. Everyone knows now that "back to the land" is impossible in England so long as the fundamental monopoly (land monopoly) continues, because there is no land available for use, except under conditions which make its use unprofitable. The long struggle to open the gate of the industrial prison has made this abundantly clear.

With the introduction of the Small Holdings Act there appeared to be dawning a new day for the people of England, but the light glimmered and went out when the attempt was made to apply its provisions. The Garden City movement seemed to promise something, but whatever its benefits it has had no effect upon the labour market; indeed, this market is brought under closer control. To Joseph it was clear that the key to the whole problem was simply that the worker, to have any advantageous position, must in the last resort be able to leave industry and secure a comfortable livelihood by the pursuit of agriculture. He saw that it was as a great alternative occupation that agriculture could supplement and balance industry, and play its appropriate rôle in the life of a nation. Allow the land to be available for use, give the children as much instruction in natural occupa-

tions as in the crafts, and the rights of the workers would not be long in establishing themselves.

Only a few years ago many thought that the Small Holdings Act would constitute an avenue to rural re-population. The greatest difficulty apparently was that of training members of a city-bred population for work on the soil. The best method seemed to be the establishment of colonies, which would serve as intermediate stations between town and country. The experiments of Dr. Paton and General Booth had made the idea in some degree familiar. Their underlying intention was to provide healthful employment through which workers could earn a part of their maintenance.

Modifications toward betterment in the British social economy are proverbially slow, and at the same time so vague that their general bearing is indeterminate and unconscious. To clarify its meaning is to check any tendency towards improvement because notice involves a disproportionate degree of suspicion and criticism, and consequent reaction. In England to label is to damn. The social region, bounded on one side by the fixed doctrine of the economics of employment, supply and demand in the labour market, and, on the other, by the equally hard-and-fast principle of the Poor

Law---the region occupied by the unemployed, so long barren of ideas and accessible only to the sterile seeds of charity---this field Joseph Fels chose for his labours. Just as his efforts changed many a London rubbish-heap into a garden full of living things for the further support of life, so he hoped to see the human rubbish-heap flowering and producing.

The conditions were present for some successful work to be undertaken. There was the idea of returning to the land as an outlet for unemployed labour, and the idea of colonising as the means of providing the necessary training, but no practical movement could be got under way. Authorities, both national and local, were landlocked either by convention or regulation, and charity was wholly inadequate to deal with the issue. Some sort of impetus was necessary, and this Joseph supplied. His simple, practical directness set matters moving. If it were a good thing to put the unemployed upon the land, then get land. If it were a good thing to train in colonies for agricultural work, then form colonies. If it were a labour too great for philanthropy to accomplish and required legislation and administration by State and local authorities, then proceed to secure such legislation and administration. If someone were needed to take the initiative

in all these matters, he was quite willing to offer himself.

It was clear to him that whatever was done should not be a matter of capricious charity, but of definite action on the part of public authority; that the foundations should be laid for a permanent rather than a temporary structure; that whatever existing machinery could be adapted to this new purpose should be utilised. It was not so much a lack of instrumentalities as the limitations placed upon their use that formed the chief obstacle. The administration of relief was bound to a narrow course by the principles and regulations of the Poor Law. The Guardians of the Poor with the strict interpretation of their duties, backed by official pressure, found it easier to force all the needy into the groove of utterly destitute paupers—that is, to subject them to workhouse treatment—rather than to tide them over their times of difficulty.

The idea that relief could be administered in a way which might lead to the permanent betterment of those relieved, either by providing healthful occupation or by training for a new sphere of activities, was so contrary to the intention of the Poor Law that Boards of Guardians could not see their way to broaden their activities by including a farm

colony. Joseph thought that a new spirit might be introduced into Poor Law methods if the use of a farm colony were offered to guardians to relieve the congestion in the workhouse, or the strain upon outdoor relief. And evidence speedily developed in a way that enabled him to give effect to this view.

Chapter V

Farm Colonies: Laindon

THE cause of Labour in Britain in its struggle toward political expression and representation has had its martyrs and heroes, also its due proportion of the stupid and time-serving. The struggle culminated in 1893 in the formation of the Independent Labour Party. Its avowed purpose was political action, apart from, and independent of, the two historic Parties. During the first ten years of its existence men and women of all classes were attracted to its banner, although its chief support was naturally found among the workers. Like all new movements, it was full of enthusiasm and courage. These qualities prompted it at times to enter into political campaigns that were beyond its strength, but it appeared to thrive on its defeats. Towards the end of 1900 it was seen by those who led this new political movement that, before any further real progress could be made, there must be allied to it the great force of organised labour as represented by the Trade Unions. This alliance was ultimately accomplished, and among those who made it possible was J. Keir Hardie. Joseph was already acquainted with "Keir." He had

visited us in our home at Philadelphia when, on the loss of his seat in West Ham in 1895, he came to America at the invitation of the American Labour Unions. As the chief, and, for a long time, the only spokesman for Labour in the House of Commons, Keir Hardie displayed a devotion and a courage which will receive a greater appreciation in the future than even his colleagues are able at present to accord. These sterling qualities commended him to us and gave him a warm place in our hearts.

When this new political combination unexpectedly found its strength in 1906 with a relatively imposing representation in Parliament, and knew that henceforth it was a power in politics to be reckoned with, it faced the difficulty of reducing to a measurable programme of action the multitudinous discontents of the labour world, and somehow discovered enough agreement to present a solid front to political opponents. Unfortunately the independence of many of its representatives in the parliamentary area was to a large extent nullified by the adoption of orthodox political machinery. It became, as everyone knows, a "Party." Its representatives were disciplined to the orders of a "whip," and

the expression of their views duly arranged and officialised.

Joseph took a keen interest in the rise and progress of the Labour Party. He hoped it would justify its existence, growing up untrammelled by methods which shackled the orthodox parties. The early enthusiasm and success of this new political force gave promise that this would be so. He was encouraged when it appeared that its object was to attack fundamental evils, and not to follow the ordinary political labyrinth in which so many hopeful causes and striking personalities of the past have lost their way. The British House of Commons has too often proved a cemetery for effectively burying both causes and reputations. Although the Labour Party has not accomplished all that its founders and friends hoped for, Joseph believed that the salvation of the working classes would be found in their unitedly attacking the fundamental cause of poverty—which to him was represented by the monopoly of the land, which creates a privileged class.

The year 1903 in other ways brought hope and encouragement to Joseph. It was in this year that he came in contact with Mr. George Lansbury, and formed that partnership in social and political work which has left its enduring mark upon this gene-

ration. When they first met, Mr. Lansbury had not yet entered the House of Commons as a member; he, like some others, had been content to pioneer and make it possible for the workers to secure direct representation. Mr. Lansbury entered politics because he felt he had a special work to perform, but it is doubtful if the dull fetters of membership of the House of Commons gave him a wider or more useful scope than he had enjoyed as a private citizen of the East End of London. He had become one of the most expert Poor Law Administrators in the country, having served a long period on the Poplar Board of Guardians, where he endeavoured to extend the scope of relief in a way to alter materially the limitations of the prevailing methods. As one of the Commissioners on the Reform of the Poor Law he gave his knowledge and experience to the framing of the Minority Report. He is one of the men, rare enough in or out of public life, who may be trusted to know the right intuitively and pursue it unflinchingly, whatever theoretical opinions they may express or be credited with. We know that when, later, party loyalty came in conflict with his convictions he preferred the loss of his seat to a sacrifice of his principles.

Joseph was at this time busy advocating the

establishment of small holdings and farm labour colonies, and, as usual, was ever on the look-out for men who were "doing things." One day he read a speech delivered by George Lansbury at a meeting of the Poplar Board. Its human note rang true and he immediately resolved to know the speaker. He telephoned to the Clerk of the Board inquiring for Mr. Lansbury's address, and at once went to see him. Association with such a man was most helpful, and their connection and co-operation covered an uninterrupted period of eleven years. During his first visit to Mr. Lansbury at his home in Bow the conversation turned upon the utilisation of land as a mode of solving the problem of unemployment, a subject upon which Joseph found him intensely keen.

Mr. Lansbury was impressed by the business-like energy of his new friend and his desire to do rather than to talk. Hardly a day passed without their meeting. Mr. Lansbury's greatest concern was that in Poplar, one of the poorest of the East-End districts, the problem of unemployment had reached an acute point. The workhouse was inadequate for the accommodation of those who wished to enter, and great distress was being experienced by many others in the district who were not applying to the Guardians for relief. Joseph's

sympathies were aroused and he urged on, and gave support to, a vigorous agitation. A procession of a thousand women was organised and marched from Mile End to Westminster. From among these, a deputation of working-class women was chosen to go to the House of Commons. It is an interesting fact that this was the first deputation of its kind to enter the House, and probably gave to the Suffragettes their idea of petitioning in the same manner. On this occasion only working-class women waited upon Mr. Balfour and Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman. A number of members were interviewed the same afternoon. Nothing, however, was done by those in authority during that session.

But Mr. Fels was not content to wait. He proceeded to worry the Local Government Board, and persuaded Mr. Walter Long to sanction the use of some land he was ready to buy and lend to the Poplar Board of Guardians. This proposal was, of course, supported by Mr. Lansbury's vigorous agitation outside. About one hundred acres were bought at Laindon, and the first Farm Colony for the unemployed was established. It is noteworthy that in connection with this purchase some one of the Guardians disclosed the fact that the farm in question was to be secured, and in consequence the

price was increased more than £500. The arrangement was that the farm should be let to the Poplar Guardians for the term of three years at the rent of one peppercorn, and that the Guardians should have the option of purchase at any time during their tenancy for the original price paid. Possession was taken in March, 1904, and one hundred able-bodied paupers were set to work. Temporary structures for dormitories, kitchen, laundry, and lavatory were added, and a reservoir for water supply was immediately built.

The Colony was visited by a large number of public men and social reformers; among others, the Rt. Hon. Gerald W. Balfour—who succeeded Mr. Walter Long as President of the Local Government Board—Canon Barnett, Sir Horace Plunkett, Sir John Gorst, Sir William Mather, and Mr. Percy Alden. In addition to these, representatives from County Councils, Boards of Guardians, and other public local authorities went to investigate the experiment. Many newspaper correspondents also visited the Farm Colony, and thus the work became widely known. The prevailing idea that the class of people who find their way to the workhouse do so because they are either useless, or “work-shy,” was disproved by the report presented by the Farm Superintendent, in which he

stated that 40 of the 100 men then employed would be acceptable as workers anywhere if he were the employer. A large number of the men were old soldiers of at least 10 years' service, and all but one had stripes or medals; not one had a pension. In contrast with the degenerative restrictions of the workhouse, the men were given great freedom. Papers, books, and games were provided, and Joseph sent down a piano. The success of the Colony was immediately manifest to all except those who believed that the workhouse test was a foundation of the British Empire. As an example of what was considered enlightened procedure, the following may be quoted from a letter in the *Times* by a Paddington Guardian :

May I draw attention to the methods pursued by the Paddington Guardians for the last thirty years in connection with the unemployed? . . .

A married man on applying for relief is offered work in the labour yard where firewood is made. The work is renewed week by week if necessary, and if the man's conduct is reported well of by the labour master. . . . For his further help, the labour yard is constantly visited by an officer of the Church Army, and the labour master gives him opportunity to seek work. Many years' experience has shown the success of this method. . . . In Paddington there are some thirty thousand people who, in Mr. Charles Booth's words, "have a struggle to obtain the

necessaries of life and make both ends meet," yet year after year men in Paddington, who by experience know what winter suffering is, persistently refrain from seeking means by which they and their wives and families may be fed and warmed.

This shows how far the Laindon experiment had gone beyond what was commonly accepted as enlightened practice in the administration of relief. An illustrated booklet was issued, and visitors from all parts of the country came to see the experiment.

The policy accepted and made effective by the Poplar Board of Guardians seemed to Mr. Fels to offer that combination of public authority and private enterprise which would solve his problem. He therefore proceeded with the acquisition of farm properties and at the same time approached the various metropolitan Boards of Guardians and extended his offer generally to all parts of the kingdom. At first these bodies seemed eager and many of them invited him to attend and explain the terms of his offer. Public bodies are as acquisitive as individuals, and the glory of their administrative achievement is measured inversely to the scale of expense. No amelioration of the lot of the poor is creditable if it increases the rate. Public feeling shudders at starvation but does not in the least mind permanent destitution.

The Board of Guardians and the administration of relief stand historically and actually apart from the general system of local government. It has no responsibility to, or connection with, the county or borough council. It maintains a separate election, a separate rate and a separate connection with the Local Government Board. Members are unpaid, but too often seek election for the sake of local prestige. The Board's functions are the maintenance of a workhouse and the administration of outdoor relief. The principle which animates all its activities is that of the old Poor Law which provided that the state of any person seeking relief must be calculatedly kept lower than that of the lowest paid labourer. It has always been supposed that an automatic test of destitution was provided by making the conditions of relief unattractive. The Boards are, therefore, not guardians of the poor but of the rates levied for the avowed purpose of relieving them. It naturally follows that those individuals are more readily elected who are prepared to keep the poor-rate down to that point which will just guard a locality from the accusation of permitting its poor to starve.

As a result of vigorous agitation the country was at last so aroused that an investigation into the working of the Poor Law had to be made.

A Royal Commission was set up, upon which Mr. George Lansbury was appointed a member. A long and laborious enquiry followed, and investigations—so loved by those who, never poor themselves, are unable to understand why it is that others are poor—were made.

The conclusions arrived at by the majority of the Commissioners did not suggest any drastic reform; did not propose to touch fundamental causes; they, at best, simply perpetuated the policy of relief rather than aimed at the prevention of poverty. Needless to say, Mr. Lansbury did not share in these conclusions. He, together with Mrs. Sidney Webb, the Rev. Russell Wakefield—who afterwards became Bishop of Birmingham—and Mr. F. Chandler, presented a "Minority Report," which proposed the complete break-up of the Poor Law system, and the setting up of machinery for the purpose of preventing destitution arising from bad social conditions.

The close and local responsibility of guardians to ratepayers, with its necessary consequence in the kind of personnel thus selected, explains the reception which Mr. Fels met with in his efforts to help the poor to help themselves. There was also another explanation. In Britain charity is understood, and business is understood, but few

appear to understand that the two can in any way be combined. The provision of land to form labour colonies seemed at first glance the act of the amiable philanthropist to be fully exploited and rewarded with the usual fatuous vote of thanks. The moment the conditions were disclosed, the whole transaction appeared to discerning guardians as a wolf in sheep's clothing, business parading as philanthropy. Here was Mr. Fels, a sharp business man, an American and a Jew, trying to extricate himself from bad land deals at the public expense, or else proposing to seize the three years' improvement which the colony might give to the land. Joseph, of course, had no desire for the cheap glory of the philanthropist which comes of relieving others of work and responsibility; his desire was to facilitate a new *modus operandi* in dealing with unemployment. He was willing to risk losses to achieve his object, but he saw, as always, that to be permanently beneficial a plan must stand on its own feet and not live on the passing bounty of any individual.

An example of the way in which his offer was met may not be out of place. At a meeting of the Distress Committee of Stratford (London) a discussion took place, the lines of which are

indicated by the following extracts from a report of the proceedings:

The Executive Sub-Committee presented a report upon the farm colony proposals. They had received an offer from Mr. J. Fels of an estate at Wickford of some five hundred acres at a peppercorn rent for three years; the Committee then to have the right of purchase at the figure at which Mr. Fels acquired the property. The Sub-Committee secured the opinion of Mr. Kemsley, of Messrs. Kemsley and Co., who reported strongly against the use of the land for such purposes on the ground of its unworkable character during winter months at a time when in West Ham they would have the need for larger scope for a farm colony. Mr. Kemsley stated the reasons for such an opinion, which were strongly supported by the Sub-Committee, who spent a day on the farm and went into the full details. . . .

Mr. Fels said he did not agree with the opinions of the expert because they were not actual facts. . . . Two hundred men with spades could be put on the land, the arable land could be broken up and the pasture land could all be cultivated. They could grow fruit there. He had communicated with the Essex County Council, asking them to put ditches in the main road to drain the ground. The farm was as good as they could get anywhere within fifty miles of London. . . .

Mr. Paul stated that on the farm Mr. Fels offered to the West Ham Board of Guardians he wanted to occupy the valuable frontage himself.

Mr. Fels: "Who says that?"

Mr. Paul: "That is what you told the Board of Guardians."

Mr. Fels: "That is absolutely untrue."

Mr. Paul: "Do you say that is untrue? Do you deny the truth of my statement? . . ."

Mr. Fels said his view was that it was no use putting two hundred men on the land unless they placed some incentive before them. He proposed to retain 20 per cent. of the land, in order to provide plots on which were to be erected buildings to be let for small holdings. He did not hope to make any money out of it. He made money out of his business. He was not speculating in property. He reserved the right to be believed until they proved him to be a liar. . . .

Mr. George Hay remarked he had no wish to make any charge against Mr. Fels, because he believed that gentleman meant well. He made a fair offer if the land was suitable. . . .

Mr. Arnold Hills protested against the gross discourtesy with which Mr. Fels had been treated. There was such a thing as casting pearls before those who did not appreciate them. He had farmed Essex land for more than twenty years, and he could not accept Mr. Kemsley's report. Mr. Kemsley said they would do more harm than good there. Of course, they would never do any good if they acted in the same way the Essex farmers did, but with spade digging it would grow almost any kind of crop.

Mr. Kemsley said he felt he had a very thankless task as they had a gentleman who had offered them land on very favourable terms for a farm colony. All he could say was exactly opposite to what Mr. Fels had said . . . no business man would take this heavy land on as a speculation. . . .

Councillor Watts said the Sub-Committee were more than anxious to get men on the ground, but they did not wish to commit themselves to impracticable schemes. They were anxious to get the two thousand pounds, but they were going to be honest to themselves and the general public. He was not going to be a party to any half measures. . . .*

On the motion of Mr. Mills, a vote of thanks was tendered to Mr. Masterman, Mr. Fels, and Mr. Lansbury for their attendance.

* It is interesting, at this date, to be able to record the fact that the land in question is still in my possession and being worked successfully.

Chapter VI

Hollesley Bay and Mayland

AS there appeared to be considerable prospect of local authorities taking advantage of Joseph's offer, now made broadly known through the Press, he and Mr. Lansbury found themselves, not long after the successful beginning of the Laindon experiment, making visits throughout England, and inspecting land of all kinds. As a result of these investigations, an estate at Hollesley Bay was discovered to be available. This was a property of thirteen hundred acres organised as an agricultural college for the sons of gentlemen, but it had fallen upon bad times and was now for sale. Mr. Fels and Mr. Lansbury went to the estate and interviewed the managing director, who treated them very much as interfering intruders, and seemed to think that although the place was for sale it was wicked for anyone to think of buying it. For his consolation nothing was said about purchase or the use for which it was intended. The difficulty was that the price was something over thirty thousand pounds, an amount which few public authorities might be willing to venture.

Meanwhile matters were becoming more acute,

and the Government was being greatly worried, partly owing to the agitation which had been set on foot. It was at this stage that Mr. Walter Long called a conference of guardians and counsellors and from it formed the organisation known as the London Unemployed Fund, upon which all London Authorities were represented. At the first meeting a letter was read from Mr. Fels offering the loan of an estate of thirteen hundred acres for three years free of rent. Mr. Lansbury, who was a member, moved that this generous offer be accepted. The motion was seconded by Mr. Grinling, of Woolwich, and unanimously carried. Thus was quietly inaugurated, without flourish of trumpets, a practical experiment full of great possibilities.

Joseph bought the estate, and within a few weeks the place was occupied by five or six hundred of the unemployed. The question arose as to how the land should be worked, and after some months Mr. Thomas Smith, later Mr. Fels' manager at Mayland, was called in as expert. Among the unemployed men sent to the colony were numbers who showed great adaptability and proved capable of doing much better work than was possible under the conditions prevailing there. The problem was therefore as to whether some of the

men should not be permanently settled on the land. This raised the question of lack of cottage accommodation, and the degree to which development could be undertaken, which depended upon whether or not the estate would remain public property.

By this time unemployment had assumed alarming proportions, and agitation was rife, particularly in London. Demand was made for the passing of a "Right to Work" Bill. Demonstrations and processions organised by Geo. Lansbury, Keir Hardie, and others at last awakened the authorities to the seriousness of the situation. In all this Joseph gave effective and generous aid. Again the women played a prominent part. On one occasion, 10,000 of them, chiefly from East and South London, marched in a great procession across London. A deputation of from twenty to thirty women, and some men representing the London Trades Council, waited on Mr. Arthur Balfour, M.P. Very little practical encouragement resulted immediately. But the agitation was continued, and the Unemployed Workmen Bill, the fate of which had hung in the balance, was passed, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain intervening in its favour. This was at the end of 1905.

With the advent of the Central (Unemployed)

Body set up under the Unemployed Workmen Act, the position was more secure, but there was a shortage of funds to carry on the work at Hollesley Bay. As a result of the appeal made to Mr. Balfour by the deputation, Queen Alexandra opened a fund, and for one winter this fund provided all the money necessary.

The Central Body which had taken the place of the London Unemployed Fund was persuaded to take over the estate at Hollesley, and Joseph loaned two thousand pounds with which to build cottages. As soon as these cottages were completed they were occupied by the London men who had been trained on the colony. The attention of Mr. Fels and Mr. Lansbury was then given to extending the plan so as to deal with larger numbers of men. It was intended to purchase another estate, and much territory was scoured to find a suitable one. It was found close to Hollesley Bay, and the purchase was at the point of completion when another factor entered into and altered the whole situation.

With the change of Government early in 1906, Mr. John Burns became President of the Local Government Board. Mr. Burns forbade the Central Body to have anything to do with the purchase of a new estate and the whole plan was ruined.

All the progressive action of those enlightened statesmen, Walter Long and Gerald Balfour, who had presided over the department, was reversed, and Hollesley Bay became merely a country annex to take the overflow from London workhouses.

It will have been discerned that Joseph's main object was to establish a permanent relation between the land and as many of the workers as could adapt themselves to its cultivation. Of each property offered to the public authorities, he proposed to retain something like a quarter, to be developed into small holdings for the benefit of men trained in the colony; they would serve, at any rate, as an example to the others. The whole work was an endeavour to remedy that topsyturvydom in which millions of acres lying uncultivated, and tens of thousands of men wanting work and ready to cultivate them could not be brought together. Plans were made for utilising a property at Wye as a colony for women, but once more Mr. John Burns blocked the way.

Thwarted thus in his endeavour to contribute to the solution of the unemployed problem, Mr. Fels decided to test possibilities on his own account. He had acquired a property at Mayland, near Althorn, in Essex, about forty miles from London, and now proceeded to use it for the purposes of his

experiment. The remaining possibility seemed to him to lie along the line of small holdings. He therefore proceeded to establish upon the farm in question twenty-one holdings of from five to ten acres, each equipped with dwelling and out-houses and partly planted with fruit. The larger portion of the estate was carried on as a farm under the management of Mr. Thomas Smith, an expert agriculturist and enlightened man, who was willing to give the small holders needful advice and supervise their work until they had learned to find their own way. For the purposes of instruction and also to give a demonstration of the possibilities of intensive culture, a French garden was established which was extended to cover two acres, equipped with frames and bell-glasses, sheds and watering facilities, and a great range of hot-houses. A gardener was secured from near Paris and kept for two years to demonstrate the best methods that were being utilised in France. The Mayland experiment was a costly one, something like thirty-five thousand pounds being required to lay out and equip the estate.

It was Mr. Fels' desire on this occasion to reach a somewhat better type of human industrial product than the unemployed examples he had been dealing with. The small holdings were therefore

allotted to individuals with families who possessed a certain minimum amount of capital. Needless to say, there were many hundreds of applicants.

There was much hope, in the early days of Liberal administration, of a great development in the direction of small holdings through a vigorous application of the Small Holdings Act, which conferred considerable power upon county councils. But, as everyone knows, the Act remained, and still remains, a dead letter. One reason for this is clear. The Act is based upon the wrong principle, land purchase, and this imposes so heavy a burden upon the small holder that its operations are necessarily limited. In those earlier days it was thought, and Joseph shared the delusion, that the time was arriving when Britain might be an agricultural nation, and again fasten in the soil the roots of its national life.

From this costly experiment Joseph learned a number of lessons. There was clearly manifest a desire on the part of the industrial labourer to enter agricultural life, as shown in the twelve hundred or more applications for these few holdings, and a strong determination, among most of those who had embarked, to continue the new mode of life in spite of all discouragement. It was clear, again, that some of the factors that could have

turned failure into success lay outside his control and were of the nature of public services and utilities. Most important of all, it became evident that for a number of reasons *every small holder would lie in the hollow of the landlord's hand*. Other impressive facts came to light. The rates paid in 1905, when the population was fourteen, amounted to thirty pounds twelve and threepence. In 1910, with one hundred and seventy-four persons, the rates amounted to one hundred and fifty-six pounds nine and twopence. The land was originally purchased at about eight pounds three shillings per acre, but after the enterprise developed it was not possible to obtain adjoining land for less than fourteen pounds per acre. Thus the small holders through their own industry, by increasing the land values for all the neighbouring landlords, blocked the way to expansion. Mr. Fels had also learned that the twenty-one holdings which he had established and supported could do nothing towards assisting the hundreds of thousands that it would be necessary to aid, if the problem of poverty was to be solved.

Chapter VII

Why Small Holdings Fail

IT was now essential for Mr. Fels to reconsider the whole theory of small holdings. His conviction that a return to agriculture was essential to a healthy national life and as a preventive of poverty was stronger than ever, but the existing modes of providing small holdings seemed fatally defective. It was important to inquire whether the conditions under which intensive agriculture was carried on in Continental countries would throw light upon and assist the solution of the problem. It seemed clear that the authorities, even with powers of compulsory acquisition, would do little toward providing land.

The first impression of one visiting the gardening districts of Denmark, Holland, and Belgium is likely to be misleading. That enormous quantities are produced and placed on the markets goes without saying, and there is the appearance of great prosperity, but matters do not, on closer inspection, turn out to be so satisfactory. The small holders in all these countries receive scant benefit from their labour, and live, in a large proportion of cases, on the borders of privation. Any satisfactory proposals looking to repopula-

tion of the country must take these facts into account and give some explanation of their cause. The first fact that inquiry discloses is that there are many more would-be small holders than there are small holdings. In other words, there is perpetual competition, the tendency of which is to put the highest premium on merely obtaining land. The one who is willing to sacrifice in the highest degree the benefits of his holding is the one who will obtain it. This keeps the rental value of land so high as to take from the small holder all except the merest livelihood. In some parts of Flanders the price of land before the war had risen to several hundred pounds per acre. In Denmark for many years land values have been rising by leaps and bounds. In the latter country, also, nearly all that the landlord leaves is taken in the form of taxes levied on buildings and equipment. It is obvious, then, that communities of small holders, however much they may contribute to the prosperity of a country, participate in that prosperity in only a minimum degree, and so far from relieving the burden of poverty they merely swell it. Joseph saw that the conditions which militate against small holdings, and are even fatal to their success, are land monopoly and the taxing of improvements. That all labour put into a holding

merely increases its rental value, which the landlord promptly seizes, and its rateable value, which the collector of taxes quite as promptly takes into account.

Statistics in Denmark show that the small holders produce in live stock alone double the quantity of horned cattle per acre that are produced in the country as a whole, over three times as many pigs, and over twice as many fowls. The movement towards increasing small holdings has been so strong since the beginning of the century that more than half the increase in population is found in the country districts. In spite of this enormous benefit which the community derives from its peasant farmers, both in quality of population and quantity of output, it is a mistake to suppose that they lead anything but a life of poverty. In too many cases the peasants are found in a state not far removed from starvation. In the long run, therefore, it is a doubtful benefit to any country to establish small holdings to a large extent, unless the workers can be guarded from injustice and assured some fair return for their labour. To mention Denmark is to produce the very best example. In Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and Belgium the conditions have been much worse. Even in Denmark the peasant is doomed to frugal

fare. He exports to England what he produces in order to have the money to pay his taxes and the interest on his mortgage. The net income of the Danish small holder seldom exceeds fifty pounds a year.

It is interesting, therefore, to discover why it is that intensive culture applied to ten acres produces less net profit than the ordinary tillage of thirty. Expenses are less, as there is not so much ploughing or manuring or harvesting. Moreover, co-operation has made it possible to market with the greatest advantage, at any rate equal to that possessed by the larger farmer. Why, then, if the small holder produces two or three times as much per acre and the cost of production of any given quantity is consequently less, does he not receive a net income at least equivalent to that of his neighbour? It is obvious that there is something wrong if three times the gross revenue per acre that the large holder receives does not net sufficient to maintain the peasant farmer in a relative degree of comfort. Flanders before the war afforded an even more striking example. In this great garden country, with all the advantages of co-operation, only a small percentage were proprietors of their holdings. The remainder paid an increasingly high rental and were only annual tenants liable to

be dispossessed without compensation. Whatever was done to improve a holding at once increased the rent.

The price of land in these countries has been constantly mounting up, following the rental value which is its chief basis. In Denmark this tendency has been aided by the incidence of taxation. Under the old system there was a tax on land values levied together with rates according to a very old valuation. There was, therefore, an inducement for the owner of land either to cultivate it himself or else to sell; consequently the price of land remained reasonable. In 1840 the agricultural land was graded into different classes according to value and a land tax imposed for national and local purposes, equal to $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £ on capital value. Being levied on an old assessment and only on land at its agricultural value, the unfairness of it was recognised. In 1902 the landed proprietors took advantage of this to have a tax substituted on land and improvements. This tax, however, was only to come into operation over a period of fifteen years, and has not yet become embodied in the fiscal system. There are signs in Denmark, where a new land valuation is being carried out, that the new land tax will be on the lines of the old one instead of the landlord arrangement of 1902.

With the abolition of the old land tax the price of land at once advanced to cover its capitalised value, which was estimated at some forty million pounds. There was no longer an inducement to sell, and land was gradually withdrawn from the market. In two or three years the price increased 25 to 40 per cent. In order to buy a holding, therefore, it was necessary to sink a larger proportion of ready capital which might have gone into improvement, or else condemn a larger proportion of the labour product to pay interest on mortgage debt. Where improvements were carried out, the new taxes fell upon them, and the small holder's labour had to pay them as well as bear the mortgage burden. The large holder with many acres and few improvements escaped with a small tax per acre, while the small holder with many improvements paid a tax per acre many times higher.

The foregoing considerations throw valuable light upon proposals for State aid in the establishment of small holdings. These are without exception, in one form or another, provisions for State purchase. They usually involve the method of advancing capital at a low rate of interest for the purchase of holdings, and require on the part of the would-be holder a certain proportion of the necessary capital. Invariably the land desired for

the purpose advances in price to a quite disproportionate amount. In Denmark very often the land speculator is willing to advance to the purchaser the proportion of capital which he is required to provide, knowing that he will recoup himself when the purchase takes place. The result of this system is a demand for land which forces up its value instead of increasing the supply and making it cheap and accessible. Government assistance means, therefore, that the peasant may obtain land, but that when obtained he will not be able to make his living upon it. In one of his terse phrases Joseph put the whole matter thus: "Instead of men demanding land, the land must be made to demand men."

His view was that the laws of a country should be so framed that its population may be enabled to make use of that country's land. There are certain well-known facts which gave a point of departure to his conclusions on this point. It is universally true that the conditions of labour are best in a new country where land is cheap and plentiful. Wages are invariably high. Instead of many men competing with each other to secure a piece of work, the work is compelled to look for a man and pay him what he demands. No one is compelled to continue as labourer either in industry or in agri-

culture, where it is easy to become a land-user and therefore independent. The simple effect upon the labour market, or the demand for men's services, where land is cheap and accessible is very positive, and contains the clue to the whole matter. The same is seen wherever there is any considerable amount of common land. A little while ago the Commission appointed to investigate the scarcity of labour and high wages in Uganda came to the conclusion that both were due to the existence of the reserves—large tracts pre-empted from occupation by the foreigner; and the Commission actually advocated the diminution of this territory in order to make the natives work. A European example was to be found in the Ardennes, where there existed common lands with a sparse population and little industry, and wages were far higher than in thickly populated and highly cultivated Flanders. With accessible land the universal rule is that if industry fails to pay an adequate price for labour, the latter simply removes itself to the land where it is certain of its livelihood. It was not mere greed which led to the enclosure of English commons but the demand for cheap labour. To put the matter bluntly, men were shut away from their one great recourse in order to be compelled to accept the employers own price for their services.

By 1908 it was very clear to Joseph not only that the Small Holdings Act would not be very generally applied, but that even if it should be it would be ineffective. He also saw that State purchase would defeat its own ends and that the small holder working with Government aid would have to carry a burden that the small holder could not support. He wanted some method that would make land plentiful and accessible as in new countries. But unfortunately in Europe, and especially in Britain, the land is monopolised and its use restricted by a relatively small number of individuals. It was necessary to make them relinquish their monopoly. Nationalisation by purchase did not commend itself to him, as it would only increase the difficulty which he was trying to avoid. For the State to enter the market means the highest possible prices, and even if the capital applied should bear only a low rate of interest, it would constitute an overwhelming burden for the peasant farmer. Land to be useful for small holders must be not only plentiful but cheap, or, put in other words, its value must be use-value. In this way Joseph came to see that the only effective method of dealing with the problem would be to place a tax upon the value of land apart from all improvements. He saw that if such a tax were

gradually raised to the equivalence of rent, which is the ultimate basis of all capitalised land value, the prices would fall to a use basis. No one would care to hold land for rent if this rent were to be immediately collected from him by the State, and no one could afford to hold land without using it to the fullest degree if he had to hand over its annual rental value for the privilege of holding.

The plan had a further advantage in that improvements would be relieved of the taxation which is found to act so harmfully in Denmark, and every inducement would thus be given to the extension of equipment and enrichment of the soil so necessary to intensive cultivation. In addition, there would be complete justice in the incidence of taxation. The land would become a series of sites for carrying on agricultural industry much in the manner of other industrial sites. Everyone is aware that the site value reflected in high or low rent depends not only upon fertility, but also upon situation and communication. The small holding near a market and with easy communication naturally fetches a higher rent than one farther removed, and this rental value would merely be transformed into tax value. In other words, the holder who is far from market and reaches it with difficulty is compensated by having to pay a lower

rental or, under the new plan, a lower tax. From now on, Mr. Fels devoted his energies to bringing about this great reform.

His exertions in the interest of land taxation cannot be described as merely the outcome of his acceptance of Henry George's principles. He was acquainted with them and was convinced that they were sound many years before he threw himself and his resources into their service. His early period of activity in England was inspired by other motives than his desire to establish land taxation, this seeming too remote and difficult of achievement for one who wished to see concrete results growing, however slowly, under his hand. His efforts to solve social problems, at first disconnected from land taxation, led him, chiefly through the failure of those efforts, to conclude that social reform without land values taxation was a hopeless struggle against conditions that hampered, and balked, and killed, and that these conditions grow out of, and centre in, the private and privileged possession of land. In the early days, like most others, he saw land monopoly and its remedy as a thing apart, for Utopian contemplation rather than for every-day work. But ten years' struggle to achieve other reforms taught him that the curse of privilege entrenched in the

ownership of land had thrust its tentacles into every part of the social order, and was ever ready to strangle every effort toward a cleaner and juster civilisation.

Chapter VIII

Political Interests

EVERY man of wealth who desires to achieve something in the direction of social betterment finds his chief difficulty to be the practical one of making personal adjustments. There is the ever-present army of sycophants; there is a multitude with ideas of greater or less value that make their appeal to be supported and set going; and there is the ever-present spectacle of human suffering to be alleviated. The path of least resistance is undoubtedly to join the brigade of philanthropists. Charity provides a means of spending unlimited money without responsibility. Its activities are systematised. There are societies for the "organisation" of charity, by whose aid wealthy persons are enabled to soothe their consciences and "do something to help the poor" without personal effort; a method which Joseph considered useless and harmful. To be known to give freely is a certain road to popularity and a crown of glory. And some strength of character is needed to resist the personal insistence as well as the inherent temptation to sink one's self in the dissipation of giving. For Joseph, palliation and tinkering with poverty were not enough. He con-

ceived it to be a fundamentally mistaken policy to use the surplus good of each generation to repair the wastage that it wrought. His ambition was to make unnecessary the activities of charity which in course of time he came to hate. They left, he was accustomed to say, nothing but evil on both sides. "I hate to give," he told an audience once, "and most men are ashamed to receive as long as charity allows them to remain men." Here was a fundamental count in the indictment. Charity cut at the root of that personal initiative and independence which constitute the very essence of manhood.

Not that he was unresponsive to individual appeals. Scarcely a day passed without needy applicants seeking him at his office. Many incidents could be recorded of his unwillingness to turn away, empty-handed, any who had a story of real necessity to tell. As an illustration the following incident may be mentioned:—To one whose calls and needs were frequent and pressing, and who, it was felt, was not over-burdened with initiative, he one day said, "Look here, brother, if I find you a job will you do it?" "Certainly," was the reply. "Come on then," said Joseph, and leaving important business affairs he took the man by the arm and went out to try and hunt up work for him.

When he returned he was asked, "Well, what is the result?" "Oh!" replied Joseph, "I had to give him another sovereign at the finish." Nevertheless, he did not believe that by simply handing out sovereigns anything permanent was to be effected. His feelings on this point have been splendidly put by Ella Wheeler Wilcox in her lines:—

"I gave a beggar from my little store
Of well-earned gold. He spent the shining ore
And came again, and yet again, still cold
And hungry as before.

"I gave a thought, and through that thought of mine
He found himself a man, supreme, divine,
Bold, clothed and crowned with blessings manifold,
And now he begs no more."

These sentiments were greatly admired by him, so much so that he had them printed for special distribution.

Motives such as these impelled him to turn away from charity as inadequate. He perceived that it was in the political field and through political agencies that his cause must advance. He determined, therefore, to put his personal services and his financial resources into the effort to place

the Taxation of Land Values upon the Statute Book.

As a distinct non-party organisation the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values was formed in London on March 23, 1907. The Committee at once commenced active co-operation with those members of the House of Commons who had already formed a Land Values group there. Mr. Fels became a member of the United Committee, but while at all times taking the deepest interest in the work he refused to take any part in discussing questions of political party policy.

The Parliamentary programme, or political Charter, of the Committee was set forth in a Land and Taxation Memorial which was presented to representatives of the Liberal Government on the 18th of May, 1911. It was signed by one hundred and seventy-six Members of Parliament. The signatories did not include members of the Irish Nationalist Party, which did not, as a party, memorialise any Government, and could not agree to make an exception in this case. It is only right, however, to say that the question of the Taxation of Land Values has had no more faithful or consistent supporters in Parliament than the Irish Nationalists.

Many politicians at this time believed that the Taxation of Land Values would be brought about only through the Liberal Party. Joseph saw in this a danger. He did not consider it should be treated as a party question, but dealt with it on its merits as fundamentally just and right. And it was hardly consistent with his character and methods to allow what he conceived to be a matter of prime importance to suffer from this narrow conception. He did not, therefore, join the Liberal ranks. His discernment had been too well trained in business affairs not to make it clear to him that the official Liberal policy would give no large place to the taxation of land values. Notwithstanding the declarations of faith by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister when receiving the memorial, the slow progress made with the Budget valuation made it clear to Joseph that the Liberal leaders did not mean what he meant. Their proposals might be very useful for fighting the Conservatives, pre-eminently a party of landlords, but as soon as the fruits of the new land policy should begin to show themselves in the world of industry the magnates who constitute the backbone of Liberalism would give it their unflinching opposition.

These considerations led Joseph to turn more

hopefully to the cause of Labour, not as a partisan, but because it was the working people who held his sympathy and whom he desired chiefly to benefit. Only the workers, he felt, would find it to their interest to carry through the reform in its full and effective measure. It might take long for the common people to see the advantage of land reform, but they in the end would find it their most certain means to the attainment of freedom and justice. He was, therefore, more and more drawn to support the cause of Labour, and whenever his aid was asked in connection with a Labour candidature he never refused it.

But there were, and are, many difficulties to overcome even in the Labour ranks. The working man, however intelligent, who has been bred to town life, who by apprenticeship or otherwise has been trained to the exercise of a particular craft, is unable to see, at first view, how land reform can solve his special problem—that problem being the simple one of securing a due proportion of the earnings of the industry in which he participates. This to the worker is the all-absorbing question that lies between himself and the capitalist who employs him. Around this central question group the minor ones pertaining to the conditions of labour. It is with regard to these matters that

he joins his fellow-workmen in order to bring united action to bear upon the employer. His ultimate recourse is the strike, which periodically faces the employer with the alternative of advancing wages or seeing his employees leave their work in a body. This self-protective outlook is the essential purpose of trade unionism. The practice of Mr. Fels' own firm, as large employers of labour, had always been to advance wages to as high a point as possible on their own initiative, because they found it to be good business policy. He knew that any struggle over wages was for the workers an unequal and losing one. However much the employer may suffer, he is nearly always in a better position to carry on a protracted conflict than his employees, who, in most cases, have few resources and can only undertake a strike at the risk of the most terrible consequences. He knew also that, union or no union, so long as the labour market carries a large surplus, wages can be held almost at the limit of subsistence. Whatever might or should be the price of labour, it is in fact determined, like that of other commodities, by the supply on the market. If the supply can be reduced, the demand, and therefore the price, will rise just as with coal, corn, or anything else; but experience goes to show that wherever an in-

crease in wages takes place there is very quickly a decided upward movement in the cost of food, clothing, rents, etc.

It is well known that the suppression of any industry will throw those who practise it into other channels. Joseph saw that the suppression of agriculture carried on continuously over nearly a century had caused the rural population to migrate to the towns, and had given a steady stream of applicants for industrial occupations. How could the tide be swept the other way, and what would be its consequences? It was clear to him that agriculture, in countries where the common people prosper, is not merely one occupation amongst many others, but the great alternative to all industry. Let the conditions for its practice be advantageous as compared with the trades, let the land demand workers and pay them adequately for their work; the consequence would be seen immediately in the withdrawal of the labour surplus in the industrial market. And that desirable state of affairs would be reached in which employers would compete for labourers, instead of labourers competing for the privilege of obtaining a job at rates that barely keep them and their families from the verge of starvation. Moreover, he saw that the taxation of land values would relieve the

working population of that unfair incidence of rates and taxes which under the existing system they have to bear.

The way in which adjustment as between agricultural and industrial pursuits would take place is precisely the same as is found in the adjustment of the trades. When a young man is faced with the necessity of choosing a means of livelihood, his choice is determined partly by inclination, partly by opportunity, but in the main by the economic advantage which one trade manifests as compared with the others. There is a perpetual selection going on of men by trades so that the benefits are equalised by reason of numbers entering. Agriculture would, therefore, not only stop the constant migration from country to town to swell the ranks of industry, but if permitted to exercise the advantages and attractions that belong to it, would undoubtedly produce a current in the opposite direction and reduce the supply of labour.

But a more important difficulty that Mr. Fels had to face in endeavouring to secure the assent of the workers to his reform was due to the fact that they had to a large extent committed themselves to the tenets of Socialism. One of the chief of these is the nationalisation of land, which naturally presents itself as an alternative reform. It is

a curious fact that reformers in so many cases keep their ideas within a closed system of principles, thus preventing co-operation in practical political activity; and it must be said that many Socialists would rather sit still contemplating the joys and the advantages of a Socialist State that is to spring full-fledged out of a moment's intervening revolution than set themselves laboriously, little by little, to shape the trend of social evolution. Joseph, always of practical bent, and basing his programme on existing conditions, was unable to give his assent to proposals which involved State ownership of all industry and the nationalisation of land by legislation or purchase. These matters might be supremely desirable of themselves, but they appeared to him to be out of the range of possible achievement in the first case, and altogether undesirable in the case of the land.

The Socialistic principle as applied to the great public services of distribution and communication had his complete support. He conceived the object of revenue to be the extension and betterment of such services, and saw also that these services were the instruments that conferred value in a great degree upon the land. It was with reference to the socialisation of these land values as a source of revenue for the public services that dif-

ferences arose. He endeavoured to make his Socialist friends see that whereas the nationalisation of land by legislation was not likely to be carried by a House of Commons dominated by landlords and lawyers, and whereas acquisition by purchase would throw an intolerable burden upon the people, the taxation of land values would accomplish what they wanted, and possessed the superior advantage of being within the sphere of practical politics. Moreover, it was not clear that nationalised land would prove the remedy for present-day evils. There must in the last analysis be individual tenure of some kind, and he urged that the State, as ultimate landlord, might not prevent the existence of a host of sub-landlords who would exploit rental values more or less as at present. And, further, he did not believe that the control of industry and land by an army of bureaucrats would produce a condition of liberty in the best sense of the word.

It is difficult to understand why Socialists have not adopted the taxation of land values as a practical and certain method of bringing about what they desire. Once the whole of the ground rental is secured to the State, it is obvious that ownership is merely a matter of words, while tenure and use must be provided for in any case.

In addition to the foregoing, Joseph could see that the full utilisation of land would go far toward the abolition of industry for profit, which lies at the heart of the Socialist contention. There is a distinction as regards the capital employed in industry which is not sufficiently taken into account. It is a simple distinction between debenture and preferred stock on the one hand, and common share issues on the other. Everyone knows that the initiatory and working provision for a new industry is supplied as capital bearing a fixed charge and constituting a mortgage on the business. This supply is necessary whoever owns the business, State or individual, and it would have to bear a charge either as interest or sinking fund for redemption. Exploitation for profit comes in connection with that large world of common share issues, the Mecca of promoters and jobbers, in which values are capitalised dividends, and which is firmly established upon the backs of the toilers. If it is admitted that the proceeds of any industry should go as reward to those who supply the actual and legitimate capital, and to the workers who carry it on, then clearly there is no room for fluctuating share values. The greater part of the City of London would be in search of means of livelihood. The difficulty is that the worker has

no way of collecting his proportion. He does not even trouble to understand that while he toils for his sovereign per week, the well-dressed individual whom he sees on his way to the City, and for whom he feels so much respect, has merely pocketed the other sovereign that he, the worker, has earned. The problem, after all, is simply how to place the worker in a position to collect the due return of his labour. Antecedent to the millennium, there appears to be only one way—namely, to make him free to give his services to, or withdraw them from, any employer. When the owners of land clamour for men to help them earn the rent which the State inexorably collects, the workers, Mr. Fels felt, will have achieved their freedom.

[It is unfortunate that many who argue against the Taxation of Land Values think that it is merely an agricultural reform. That is not so. While it is true that it would have a most important influence in turning a great flow of labour back to the land it would exercise a still greater influence, say, for instance, on such trades as the building and kindred trades. It would also provide what is most urgently required, the fundamental basis which is needed before the housing problem can be solved and slumdom destroyed.]

Chapter IX

Home Colonisation

IN the winter of 1905 the late General Booth, appalled by the degree of unemployment then existing, came to the conclusion that only in emigration was a remedy to be found. He proposed, therefore, to raise a fund by means of which five thousand families should be assisted to emigrate to Australia. He was convinced that it lay in his power to send out the type of settler of which he believed the colony to stand in need. Joseph emphatically disagreed with this proposal. He was not convinced, in the first place, that work was to be had in Australia. He doubted very seriously whether "assisted" emigration of the type suggested by General Booth would result in the choice of fit persons; and, above all, he felt certain that there was room and to spare in Great Britain for the proposed emigrants. With this thought in mind he made an offer through the Press to the British Government. It was in the following terms:

"I am informed that, probably encouraged by Mr. Rider Haggard's report to the Government on the success of Salvation Army colonies in South America, General Booth has offered to settle some 1,500 families on land in

the Colonies, if the Government will provide, say, £300,000 for that purpose.

“I believe England’s own homeland will support her present population, and she should not allow some of her best blood to leave her shores by assisted emigration. There can be no objection to voluntary emigration.

“If General Booth’s scheme is really to settle 1,500 families in the Colonies, and if he makes the proviso that the Government shall assist him in his undertaking to the extent of £300,000, I am quite sure that better results can be obtained with a like amount of money without so large a proportion of the money being unproductively paid over to transportation companies or in commissions to land and other agents.

“Bearing these points in mind, I would gladly be one of twenty to guarantee the settling—right here in Great Britain—on home land, of the same number of families with the same assistance from Government. If nineteen others cannot be found to join me, I shall still be prepared to act alone to the extent of my proportion.

“Inasmuch as there is a hitch in connection with General Booth’s scheme which will probably ultimately cause it to be entirely dropped, the present seems an opportune moment for carrying out home colonisation. During the last fifty years the number of persons employed upon the land in this country has decreased by some one and a quarter millions, whilst there is no evidence to show that the quality of the land or the conditions of the climate are responsible for this great falling-off.

“Experiments made by private landowners and public authorities prove conclusively that, under a system of small holdings, with absolute security of tenure for the cultivator, farming is still a profitable occupation. The Vale of Evesham, Worcester, is somewhat of an object-lesson in this direction, there being thousands of acres in small holdings, though conditions are not nearly what they should be in respect of permanence of tenure or of occupation.

“The public does not know that there is about the same percentage of unemployed in most of the Colonies as in the Mother Country. It may also not be aware that the United States is not a Mecca for the unemployed and the moneyless.

“In addition to agriculture, which has been so much neglected of late years in Great Britain for reasons which must be obvious to most thinking people, there is the question of afforestation. A Royal Commission has shown that there are in Great Britain some twenty million acres of absolutely wasted land capable of being put under timber. Not less than one hundred thousand adults, representing a population of (say) half a million people, would find profitable and healthy employment in this industry.

“The State forests of Germany bring in an average of about eighteen million pounds to the national exchequer; Great Britain imports timber to the value of over forty million pounds, a great proportion of which could and should be grown on home land.”

It was but a nine days' wonder. General Booth's

scheme was, as Joseph had foreshadowed, already doomed owing to the great divergence of Australian opinion as to its merits. The Press loudly acclaimed "Mr. Fels' generosity," articles were written about his "public spirit," the usual notices were contributed on the possibilities of afforestation; in prospect, indeed, the money was spent over and over again. One comment on the plan, that of the (London) *Star*, is worth preserving because it shows so real an appreciation of Joseph's object. Its editor commented on the plan as follows (issue of October 18, 1905):

"Mr. Joseph Fels comes forward with a practical proposal for the restoration of the manless land to the landless man. If the Government will grant a sum of £300,000, he will make one of twenty to guarantee the settling of fifteen hundred families in this country. If nineteen others cannot be found to join him, he is prepared to act alone to the extent of his proportion. We need not say that we heartily welcome Mr. Fels' patriotic offer. We hope he will get his nineteen partners in double quick time. Surely there are nineteen men who are willing to save England from the fate of Ireland, to stop the torrent of emigration which is draining her life blood. We have often been called 'Little Englanders' because we refuse to treat these islands as a mere parish and because we hold that the health of the outer empire depends upon our heart beats. That is why we supported Mr. Jesse

Collings in his opposition to General Booth's scheme for deporting five thousand stalwart Englishmen to Australia. We are convinced that there is plenty of land at home for the strong man, if only the barriers between him and the land are levelled. During the last fifty years, as Mr. Fels points out, the number of persons employed upon the land has decreased by a million and a quarter. . . . There is no doubt that the scientific farmer, employing modern methods, can hold his own against the world. But he must be delivered from the fetters which our obsolete land laws have riveted upon his enterprise. It is time to call our great landlords to give an account of their stewardship. There can be no radical reform without compulsion. The State must recover the land for the people.

"It is, of course, more picturesque to ship our bone and sinew off to Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. But it is a fact not generally known that the percentage of unemployed in most of the Colonies is as high as it is here. The state of South America at this moment is deplorable. Thousands of white men are walking in gloomy despair about the streets of Cape Town and Johannesburg. We hear a great deal about the successful emigrants, but of the dismal failures we hear less. There are plenty of young men who curse the day when they left England. Yet, take it all in all, we do not believe there is a finer country in the world for the honest, steady, and strenuous man than this England of ours. We ought to rediscover its unknown rural charms, and to repopulate its desolate acres. The cult of the country, which the bicycle and

the motor have revived, ought to make the task of manning the land an easy one. . . . If some part of the millions which our imperialists waste on barren war were spent on afforestation and land nationalisation, England would be happier and stronger. What did we get for the two hundred and fifty million pounds squandered in the South African War? We provided work under degrading conditions for forty-five thousand Chinamen. We established an oligarchy of landlords. Why not, in future, spend our millions at home for the benefit of our own people? ”

Joseph heartily welcomed so spirited an appeal. He urged everywhere the justification of an immediate experiment. No country, he wrote, could be truly prosperous where the “submerged” population formed a large percentage of the people. The endurance and the vitality of England must, sooner or later, be seriously threatened if there were allowed to grow up a permanently unemployed class. If competition were allowed so to operate that the worker thrown out of employment found it impossible to recover the means of livelihood, any real sentiment of patriotism became impossible.

Such was his plea. But beyond the demands of the Press that attention be devoted to his plan, nothing was done. So far as can be discovered,

no seconder of his offer appeared. The rich classes were clearly apathetic. Of Government action of any kind we are ignorant. It is possible that the plan, like that of General Booth, was referred to the ministerial committee on agricultural settlements in the Colonies; perhaps in the last months of Mr. Balfour's Administration no time could be spared from the all-important task of saving his Ministry from the destruction to which it appeared doomed. Certainly Mr. Walter Long failed to give this experiment the thoughtful consideration he had devoted to the farm labour colonies. Joseph, not unnaturally, was keenly disappointed. The need was clear, conditions were urgent. Continental experiment and analogy justified high hopes for the success of a well executed plan of home colonisation. The existence of a real land hunger had been many times demonstrated; that industrial workers could be made into useful agriculturists Joseph himself had shown. If landlords cared nothing for his plan, something was seriously wrong with the landlords. Here, as in all other endeavours, he came face to face with the same intolerable barrier to progress.

Mention has already been made of Mr. Fels' work in connection with the cultivation of vacant lots in Philadelphia. In 1904 he conceived the idea

of starting a society in London with the same object. He went about seeking the co-operation of men and women whose help seemed likely to be of service, and by the end of the year an association, with a committee to which such men as Mr. Percy Alden, Professor Patrick Geddes, Mr. George Lansbury and Mr. Israel Zangwill gave their assistance, was formed. Mr. Fels himself acted as secretary of the enterprise. The society had objects more or less similar to those of its American parent. The temporary loan of unused land was to be obtained from every possible source. This land was to be prepared during the winter for cultivation, thus providing, in some degree at any rate, a source of constructive work for the unemployed. The land so prepared was to be let either free, or at a nominal rent to approved applicants, the preference being given to those with families. Tools and seeds were to be provided either free or at cost price, and practical instruction was to be given wherever necessary.

A beginning had already been made when the society was organised with land lent by the Bromley Gas Light and Coke Company in West Ham. This was a dreary-looking tract situated in the most desolate region of East London. It had once been a fertile market garden, famous for the production

of celery. It was now covered with twitch which flourished and killed every other plant. In a few months twenty-five acres of this desert were transformed into flourishing vegetable gardens. The heavy labour of preparing their allotments fell mostly upon the applicants themselves and provided a serious test of their interest and perseverance. The result of the first season's working was a financial return of about forty pounds per acre, which meant that the holders of even a few rods had gone far toward the maintenance of themselves and families. The success of this first effort strengthened the Society in approaching public authorities and private owners. The London County Council placed at its disposal several pieces of unused land and the work was extended to many districts.

Within six months after the formation of the London Vacant Land Cultivation Society, it had given birth to similar societies in Edinburgh, Belfast, Middlesbrough and Dublin. Wherever an invitation to explain the scheme was forthcoming, Joseph threw other work aside to go. By the end of the first year the London Society had two hundred and fifty men at work on its plots, and had many more applications for land. Ninety per cent. of the men were successful in their experiment, and



SECOND ANNUAL MEETING OF THE VACANT LAND CULTIVATION SOCIETY, HELD IN THE GUILDHALL, LONDON, JULY, 1910.



the average yield per acre exceeded forty pounds sterling. Nothing handicapped the society except the lack of land.

During the eight years which followed the formation of the London Vacant Land Cultivation Society every effort was made on the lines laid down by Joseph. On the surface there did not appear to have been the success he had hoped for, since the highest number of allotments secured by the Society only represented 400, occupying about 40 acres of land, in various parts of the Metropolis.

Then came the war, and as a result food shortage. This brought home in a very effective way the object lesson which Joseph had, in this bit of social service, constantly sought to inculcate—*i.e.*, the crime of permitting land to remain idle. The nation's needs awakened the Government to the necessity for action, and drastic measures were taken to increase the supply of homegrown food-stuffs. The Council of the Vacant Land Cultivation Society seized the opportunity and joyously placed its organisation at the disposal of the authorities. The Government at this time, through the machinery provided by the Defence of the Realm Act, gave powers to the Board of Agriculture enabling that department to compulsorily take over

all unused land, and through the various local authorities to arrange for its cultivation.

Within six months the Vacant Land Cultivation Society had organised and manned no fewer than 5,500 allotments in the London area alone. As this work and the needs of the allotment holders increased, it was felt that an organisation on a wider and more democratic basis than the Vacant Land Cultivation Society was required, and as a result a conference of allotment holders was held in London, and an organisation, which eventually adopted the title of the National Union of Allotment Holders, was brought into being. The success which has attended this effort is most gratifying. The number of Societies now (1919) in the Union is over 500, with a membership approaching 160,000 individual allotment holders.

One feature of this movement, which is a matter of gratification to me, and one which would have given Joseph the greatest pleasure, is that it has not only demonstrated the great benefits which the cultivation of land held out of use would bring at a time of national crisis, but it has created a new and keen interest in the solving of the land question. It has shown the evils of private monopoly in the national resources of the country, among town dwellers in general, and the working classes in par-

ticular, a fact which must in the future bring a strong volume of public opinion to bear upon the land question with the most satisfactory results. When the average British elector understands this problem and goes to the ballot-box determined to solve it, a great step will have been taken towards realising the ideal conditions of life for which Joseph laboured so devotedly.

When it is remembered that the annual income of the V. L. C. Society during the eight years did not average more than three hundred and fifty pounds, the measure of its success will be in some degree realised. The society is still in existence, and has fully justified the efforts Joseph made to establish it.

Chapter X

The Methods of Monopoly

AS has been seen, it was clear to Mr. Fels that there was no necessary conflict between legitimate capital—that is, capital destined for actual use in the provision of equipment—and the labour necessary to make use of it. It was equally clear that profits could be derived from illegitimate capital, simply because some mode of constraint was brought to bear upon the choice of workers which forced them to lower their margin and sell their labour cheaply. His concern was to discover the origin of this constraint, and he found it in the conditions which make agriculture unattractive and unprofitable, conditions associated with the private ownership of land used for the exploitation of rental values. His further consideration of the question led him to an understanding of monopoly in general and how it always operates to keep labour in servitude. The same forces that exploit labour exploit the consumer of commodities in so far as this is possible. The consumer's only protection lies in the perfectly free play of all the activities of production and exchange, which is known as competition. It is difficult to see how the economic world could

keep itself going among a people with even a semblance of freedom without that determination of values which commodities find on the market under competitive conditions. There is no other way in which any one of the indefinitely divided and specialised functions of production can automatically find its place.

But there are elements in every business which strive to make a commodity pay more than its actual value, to intervene in what may be considered the natural economic process and so restrain it as to take an undue share of profits either from consumer or worker. An extreme example may be found in that type of South American enterprise which secures peons by the trickery of loans, keeps them bound by debt, pays them what it pleases, and compels them to purchase all supplies at its own store and at its own price. This is interference in the normal adjustment of values, both of labour and of supplies. A ring of coal dealers, acting in conjunction with producers, who held the claims of labour in abeyance by threats of Government intervention to avoid disturbance in war time, was able to force consumers to pay for a necessary commodity something more than double its value. The operations of a shipping ring is another example. Any large aggregation of capi-

tal, dealing in any commodity, can throttle small competitors and collect the losses involved through subsequent enhanced prices to consumers. These commonplaces illustrate the fact that the capitalist is always endeavouring to overreach and levy a tax for the use of commodities. Such factors are difficult to trace and more difficult to deal with, but they exist everywhere and prove that under existing conditions competition permits the most ruthless exploitation.

Joseph held that the function of the State was one of intervention in the economic process, not, however, in the old manner of being itself a monopolist. The days are past, except in backward countries, when the privilege of exclusive dealing in any commodity is sold by king or government. There is diminishing tolerance for the derivation of revenue from the direct monopoly of any article of continuous necessity. Obviously a tax upon salt could secure whatever income a State might require. The article merely goes upon the market and collects from the consumer its own value plus the tax. Any article so treated, whether matches or tobacco in France, spirits in Russia, or tea or tobacco in England, comes within the same category. Excise or tariff duties involve no difference in principle; the

liquor traffic in Great Britain is, as a matter of fact, a form of Government monopoly. The tendency is away from crude and primitive forms of interference in the economic process and more in the direction of restraint upon the more obviously predatory elements in the business world. To redress economic grievances and maintain the balance fair seems to be increasingly a function of the State.

It is obvious, however, that regulation is a mode of interference which differs in principle from intervention, or playing a direct part in the business world. Possibly regulation could be carried far enough to prevent exploitation in some kinds of industry, but its machinery would have to be elaborated to an extensive degree, and there would still remain many modes of evasion; and it is not always certain that inspection is efficient. The British railways provide a good example. The conditions of labour may be perfectly defined and well enforced, tariffs may be adjusted with great precision, there may even be control over the issue of capital and the collection of dividends, but the railway remains in principle a business for exploitation and not for service. Again, the most careful and thoroughgoing inspection of the coal industry can hardly alter the fact that neither labour nor

the consuming public has more than a small portion of the benefit from this national possession.

In America, experience proves that the Interstate Commerce Commission, even after great efforts, can have only a slight and momentary effect upon the gigantic interests that it endeavours to hold within bounds. It needs to be recognised, therefore, that while regulation and inspection are probably always necessary as a mode of State interference, they differ essentially and in principle from direct participation in the economic process. The opinion is always growing, however, that the State should be able in the last analysis to play a decisive part in the conduct of business, and that this part should somehow be associated with the derivation of the national income. If some guiding principle could be discovered which would place in Government hands the special territory in which the most extensive forms of exploitation are practised, and from which others are derived, the State would at once be in a position to apply a large income to national purposes and at the same time hold the economic balance.

Only slight examination of existing facts is needed to show that in productive industry neither capital expended on equipment nor labour hired for operation receives an undue share of returns.

It is, therefore, to the other factor in production—namely, natural resources—that attention must be given. When the combined effort of capital and labour brings to the surface a ton of coal, one of the first charges upon it is a royalty to the landowner. The accident that a man possesses a plot of land beneath which Nature has placed a carboniferous deposit, enables him, without the expenditure of capital or applying the labour of his hands, or exercising an effort of any kind, to levy a tax for his private emolument upon the consuming public. It shows great consideration on his part to allow the nation to make any use of these natural and national resources, and the people, possibly out of gratitude, as nothing else can explain this curious fact, reward him with a fortune which he does nothing to earn. One has only to mention oil, coal, steel, and copper, together with the railways which transport them, to account for nearly all the great fortunes made in America. Probably the capital actually expended in boring and pumping machinery is never overpaid; it is certain that the workers who carry on the work never receive their due. How, then, can oil produce fortunes? The answer is perfectly simple. It is by securing control of the oil supply and levying a tax upon the consumer for being permitted

to use it. This tax is merged in the price of oil, but the consumer does not realise it; indeed, does not give it a thought. A London worker who, with his family, occupies a single room, pays for the privilege of being somewhere above a few square feet of ground a tax to some individual who exerts himself no more than to check his receipts, and usually even this is deputed to someone else. One is taxed if one walks or sits or sleeps upon the earth's surface, and even for the privilege of being buried. The rule for fortune-making is, then, a simple one. It is to corner some portion of Nature and charge the world an admission fee.

So far, in commercial evolution there has appeared only one mode of protection for the purchasing public. The housewife's reply, "It is cheaper across the way, I will buy it there," contains the whole philosophy of competitive prices and the fixing of values. It is therefore of prime importance for any would-be monopolist to drive his opponents from the field, so that the purchaser may have no alternative but to buy his commodity, if it is an object of necessity, at his, the monopolist's, own prices. If a competitor cannot be driven out he may perhaps be absorbed and the spoils shared. As capital aggregates, it becomes easier to make life impossible for the smaller

opponents. For this purpose it is useful to control the means of communication. The great monopolistic trusts of America invariably dominate the important railway lines. The practical effect is simple enough. If you are a great colliery owner in any district, and a small opponent begins to work a coalfield that he happens to possess, you have only to see that he is given no railway trucks to transport his produce; you may then purchase the mine at your own price.

There is much talk in these days about the morality of business. It is held to be a reprehensible thing to strangle a small competitor or to exploit the public in a ruthless manner; is this attitude altogether sensible? Business is business, and men do what the conditions permit them to do. There are not many who would refuse the prerogatives of president of the Standard Oil Company or of a London ground landlord. If the business of highway robbery had not been excluded by a very efficient set of conditions and if it had depended upon merely moral sanctions, it would now be in a flourishing condition. As circumstances made it more difficult for the highwayman to practise his profession, he doubtless developed strong convictions regarding the inviolability of the person. It is useful for all monopolists to con-

trol the channels of publicity in order to keep before the public the eternal principle of the sanctity of private property. The fact is that as soon as the world understands the matter and is aware of parasitism, it will say little about the immorality of business, but promptly rearrange conditions to make it impossible. The monopolist is probably in the vast majority of cases like anybody else, no better and no worse, and merely takes advantage of a business opportunity presented to him, just as anyone else would do. It is foolish to attack persons instead of rearranging conditions. Mr. Fels often said that circumstances had made him a robber. He merely accepted profits from a business which depended partly upon the sagacity of his brother and himself, and partly upon the monopoly of a most valuable manufacturing process. Anyone else would do the same; but Joseph possessed a clarified vision and knew how the trick was done, and to the end of his life never felt his money to be a private possession. He was determined that, in so far as lay in his power, monopoly should be suicidal.

It is clear, then, that there are factors in the business world which tend to emerge and assume a position of advantage with reference to the others. Even if they are for a time involved in produc-

tion, they gradually withdraw and assume the rôle of tribute gatherers. Landlordism in any one of its multitudinous forms is merely a monopoly of one of the natural sources of wealth; and rent, instead of being a reward for labour or for the use of capital, is a type of profits which represents no contribution to the world's store of wealth, but is a tax levied on production for permission to approach the natural sources, paid by both capital and labour unless they can devise some means of re-collecting from the consumer. As wealth accumulates through production, the tendency is for any large fortune to entrench itself as landlord. To collect rent is the best and most secure method the world has yet devised for getting something for nothing.

It is a commonplace that increase of wealth and population carries an increase of land values and correspondingly high rentals. It is also a profitable field for speculation. To hold landed property on the outskirts of a growing town and wait for the ripe fortune to drop into one's hands is the most common of spectacles in all new countries. This eagerness to collect tribute is probably an explanation of those recurring waves of business depression which sweep over the world.

It is well known that the cost of land in the

Argentina has passed its productive value, that the profits of working can hardly more than meet the rental charges and operating expenses, and yet people wonder why there should be depression in the trade with the Argentine. The explanation is a simple one. If the landlord collects all that the land produces, there is little left with which to buy imports, and given a credit system which stands like a pyramid on its apex, it is not strange that the countries which depend on the sale of manufactured articles should feel the consequences. There is of course an arrest in the increase of land values until capital and labour, by improved processes or by adjusting themselves to a diminished margin, can recover the balance. It is difficult for the British mechanic to understand that the hard times which throw him out of employment and reduce him to privation may result from the grabbing propensities of landlords in the Argentine or Australia or South Africa. Joseph knew that his reform needed to be as world-wide as commerce and credit, and for this reason refused to work within the narrow limits of nationality. He was "the American who came interfering in the domestic affairs of England."

Chapter XI

The Single Tax

THESE years of social and economic experimentation had brought Mr. Fels into accord with the political teaching and the philosophy associated with the name of Henry George. Now it seemed to him as in a sudden illumination the social truth for which he had been so long seeking. It provided, he conceived, not merely a means for the mitigation of the ills of poverty, but a method by which poverty itself could be finally wiped out. It is characteristic of the man that once the vision was clear, he did not hesitate to throw his whole energy into the propagation of this doctrine.

The teaching which centres around the name of Henry George has come to occupy a prominent place in contemporary economic discussion. At the very height of its power and influence, the *Times* thought it necessary to devote two pages of space to a consideration of *Progress and Poverty* by the then unknown Californian. It was not a book lightly to be dismissed. Its doctrines were not sufficiently answered by the mere reply that it did not meet with the acceptance of orthodox economists. It has been characteristic of orthodox

economists to brand as impossible every new doctrine that has not yet won its way into the ordinary thought of men. The theory could command considerable antiquity if that assists to its adequate appreciation. It was urged at the birth of scientific economics. Quesnay and Turgot had firm hold of its central idea; the latter indeed had so far understood its significance that its application was the central point of his policy when Minister of Finance to Louis XVI. If the attention of thinkers was drawn away from the direction the Physiocrats attempted to give to economic study, that was due to no fault of their teaching. It was because the application of science to industry changed the whole orientation of European thought.

Wealth, the Physiocrats taught, is based upon the land. Man is economically as well as by nature a child of the earth. Henry George seized this cardinal truth at the very outset of his thought. If land is the basis of all wealth, and if all men have need of wealth that they may live, it is clearly unjust that land should become the possession of the few; as the vast majority must thereby be deprived of access to the means of living. "The ownership of land," wrote Henry George, "is the great fundamental fact which ultimately determines

the social, the political, the economic, and, consequently, the intellectual and moral condition of a people." And it must be so. For land is the habitation of man, the storehouse upon which he must draw for all he needs.

In the course of history men have, for the most part, been deprived of their natural inheritance. Yet, in order that they may live and increase, they have been compelled to add to the value of that inheritance, to augment the fortunes that a few enjoy. It is impossible to trace the steps in that process, for it is the record of the whole of mankind. But it is historically undeniable that as men have been in greater numbers divorced from the soil, as they have been forced into the towns to swell the industrial class, there have arisen the crucial economic problems that confront modern democracy. The value of land, Ricardo taught long ago, is fixed by that least productive soil which social circumstances call into productive use. The difference between its productivity and that which gives the highest yield is called, simply, rent. But who created this difference? It is not due to the foresight of any individual. It is due to position, the pressure of population, the possibility of supplying with greater ease the needs of that population. It is, in short, due to the existence of the

community. In proportion as land has been concentrated in the hands of a few, those few have been able to profit by the genius and industry of the community. Society suffers from its own improvement. By one of the grimmest ironies to which history bears witness, those to whom a purely fortuitous event has given possession of the soil become legally and economically entitled to tax the community in proportion to its progress.

For Henry George, the central social problem consisted in the removal of this anomaly. He understood what Joseph later expressed in a single emphatic phrase, "No man should have the power to take wealth he has not produced or earned." The value of land is mainly increased by communal effort. "Land," Mr. Fels wrote to a friend, "has a value apart from the value of things produced by labour; as population and industry increase, the value of land increases. That increase is community-made value. I believe it belongs to the community just as the wealth produced by you belong to you. Therefore I believe that the fundamental evil, the great God-denying crime of society, is the iniquitous system under which men are permitted to put into their pockets, confiscate in fact, the community-made values of land. It is proposed to take for the community that which

is so obviously its own. What economically it creates, that it has morally the right to enjoy. If this view were put on no ground other than that of common sense it would of a certainty be obvious enough. It is in fact socially axiomatic. We can proceed no further in our social development unless account be taken of its essential rightness."

If society creates these values it has a clear right to their possession. And, as Joseph was never tired of insisting, it is a little late in the day to bring against this new declaration of right the sneer that such rights are unhistoric. "We urge," he once told an objector, "that the right is the offspring of an obvious social need." How, then, is that right to be enforced? The answer given by the Single Taxers has, at any rate, the merit—and administratively this is of vast importance—of simplicity. It is proposed to tax the value of land, irrespective of any improvements that may be effected thereon, and to tax nothing else.

Income as a result of personal exertions is economically justified in claiming exemption. Imports and exports should be exempt because they are ultimately the product of labour. It is difficult to exaggerate the social changes which would result from this reform. It is in fact what Henry George called a true reform because it makes other reforms

possible. The taxation of land values will in the first place raise revenue. Even here it has an advantage over other systems. It is open and it is certain—two advantages not lightly to be minimised. It will have about it none of the complex mystery which is associated with taxation at the present time. That, however, is comparatively a minor advantage. Its effect on industry must necessarily be of a far-reaching character. The tax in the first place will be borne by the land owner; economists from Ricardo to Marshall have united in the declaration that a tax on economic rent cannot be shifted either to tenant or to consumer. It will thus force into use land that is at present, either for purposes of speculation or of selfish enjoyment, held out of use; for the tax will be greater than the land owner can bear unless he attempts improvements to meet it. He will have to use his land, or permit someone else to use it, simply because it will be too costly a proceeding for him to do otherwise.

What would happen in an urban community as a result of this reform was, to Mr. Fels' thinking, one of its most important consequences. The more land is forced into utilisation the cheaper must rents become; because the quantity of buildings is greater, supply is increased relatively to demand.

That is itself an important change in modern urban conditions. A serious blow may thus be struck at the prohibitive rents of great industrial centres. Not only is the landlord economically compelled to improve his urban property, but to improve it he must give work that is socially useful and thus increase employment.

If more land is forced into cultivation clearly the price of raw materials must be reduced. This from a business point of view was an argument to which Joseph attached great importance. In his own industry he found grave difficulties resulting from the possession by very few of all the available sources of supply. It was not that those sources were scanty and approaching exhaustion; supplies were deliberately restricted in order to enhance profits on a small output. He urged constantly that half the evils of the increased cost of living in recent years were due to this one tremendous fact, the "cornering," as he put it, "by a few, of the natural resources of which all men have need." He saw that if the full extent of those resources was brought into use the price of raw materials would be reduced with a clear effect upon the cost of living.

That result would improve greatly the condition of the working class. If there is an increased

demand for labour there must be an increase in wages; not even the opponents of the Single Tax deny the applicability to modern conditions of the law of supply and demand. Here was what appeared to him to be the essential merit of Henry George's doctrine. By calling into use to their fullest extent the natural resources of the State, an attack would be made at the very root of the social problem. The cost of living would be cheapened, the possibilities of the community utilised, and new opportunities opened for labour. A reform such as this appeared to him to be the first satisfactory method he had encountered of dealing with the problem of poverty.

It seemed to him, moreover, a natural reform. It would remove restrictions. It would make unnecessary those taxes on commerce which, as Henry George pointed out, prevent the free play of exchange. It would stimulate industry by opening out new opportunities for the efficient use of capital. It would make far easier the collection of revenue by substituting a simple method of taxation, which would require comparatively little administration, for a number of complex and usually conflicting methods which require a heavy staff of operators. It would lessen to a remarkable degree and even destroy the opportunities by

which monopoly and special privilege have attained the present high position in the State. It would ensure equality, inasmuch as it assumes that a man should pay for what he possesses in the way of economic privilege that the State can confer—the use of the land. It thus conforms to Adam Smith's canon of taxation that men should contribute to the State "in proportion to the revenue which they respectively enjoy under the protection of the State." Mirabeau's father was wont to say that the discovery of the principle of land taxation was of an importance equal to that of the invention of writing.

Important as were these economic considerations, it was for reasons of an ethical kind that Joseph embraced the Single Tax doctrine with so whole-hearted an enthusiasm. For him, it made possible the approach of a new social morality. It gave each man the opportunity to be himself. It opened out for the first time the well-springs of his own nature. It made possible an era of justice. This was for him essentially its greatest recommendation. For he had long been seriously oppressed by the perception that justice was impossible in a social order unjust in its very foundations. A real freedom could come only when the community had acquired the material basis of freedom; and he

realised that until that liberty was attained every plea for social fraternity was the veriest hypocrisy. "Brotherhood," he said often enough, "is only possible among equals." If a condition of life obtains in which the vast majority is dependent upon a small minority for its daily bread, that economic subjection will result in political enslavement. It was, as he saw, slavery in everything but name. It was the negation of democracy. It destroyed equality of opportunity. It created unjust distinctions of class. The economic falsehood permeated even the church. Men of religion came to preach that morality was the acceptance of this untruth. It vitiated the system of education. Political economists constructed a code which attempted to weld ever more firmly the worker's chains. That is why he stigmatised the land monopoly as a "God-denying crime." He could see no end to its ramifications. It seemed to penetrate into every nook and cranny of the State. The divorce of men from the soil had been the main source of poverty. They had lost their birthright, and it seemed to him that of all tasks by far the noblest was to restore their inheritance to them.

Many who met Mr. Fels after he had become interested in Single Tax were inclined to complain that he thought of nothing else. In a sense this

was true, and he gloried in the complaint. He told how, for the first time, he had a faith which was compelling and adequate. He had tired of the continual tinkering at social ills. He had wearied of the endless procession of unavailing reforms. Expedients of every kind he had tried. Investigations of every kind had had his sympathy and support. Yet, as he saw, decades of zealous inquiry had not resulted in the recognition of the need for something beyond the stage of mitigation. The cry for social reform, for better housing, higher wages, shorter hours----all these were so many soporifics to make men willing to endure an order wrong and rotten in its foundation. "The cure for poverty," he once said, "is its prevention." He hated from the very depths of his being the smug complacency of charitable endeavour. What he wanted was more than a formula of benevolent regret. That was the secret of the devotion he paid to his faith.

It is worth while emphasising how empirical was Joseph's faith. It was not some sudden revelation of a mystery that had been previously hidden. It came to him after long and careful inquiry, after manifold experiments. He had tried charitable work. He had supported almost every Socialist and Labour movement. He had attempted colonising enterprise. Increasingly he had come to see how

clearly the dearth of available land lay at the root of social ills. He saw, too, that the land monopoly was a hydra-headed monster; to cut off any save the central head was but to strengthen and revivify it. It came to him slowly, but with the deep conviction that is born of intimate experience, that the cardinal principle in any declaration of social faith must be the destruction of the land monopoly. Everything else seemed to him but the establishment of fine superstructures upon a worthless basis of sand, and, as he once whimsically said, "Even for that rent had to be paid." He did not put forward the Single Tax as a panacea. He had too much knowledge of the complexity of social life to be thus unintelligent. What he did insistently emphasise was the truth that the time for tinkering at our ills had gone by, that it was vital to set about the building of a new social structure.

With Joseph, to realise was to act. Once the vision had been clearly seen, he set to work to attempt its fulfilment. He made inquiries in every direction to know what work was being done for the Single Tax, who were doing it, how it was being done. He proffered whatever services he could render, time, money, organisation, thought, with an eager gladness that put new courage into the hearts of all with whom he came in contact. Unlike the

majority of any movement, he contributed not only enthusiasm but also, what was even more important, suggestive ideas. He was so essentially a man of action that in him theory, almost at the birth, crystallised into practice. The thing was urgent, it should be done. There was something infectious in the optimism by which he became possessed. He was, as he conceived, working directly at the main root of social ill. He had been given a key that opened the gate to a new and splendid world.

It is not without significance that to Henry George, no less than to Joseph Fels, did the inspiration of this work bring content and optimism. Those who knew him found in him a new purposiveness direct and impressive. The reason is simple. They had both been puzzled by the confusion of the modern social order. They had both, until comparatively well on in years, wandered almost blindly ahead, searching, experimenting, hoping, and yet ever failing to find a real clue to that vast labyrinth. The watchwords of a campaign were theirs. They knew that over the gateway of the world of their dream liberty and justice must be written. They knew there was work for them to do; and then there came knowledge of the way. "Liberty," wrote Henry George, "came to a race of slaves crouching under Egyptian whips and

led them forth from the House of Bondage. She hardened them in the desert and made them a race of conquerors. The free spirit of the Mosaic law took their thinkers up to heights where they beheld the unity of God, and inspired in their poets strains that yet phrase the highest exaltations of thought." It was the desire to recover the spirit of liberty that took possession of Henry George and, in no less degree, of Joseph Fels. He would help men, in that fine phrase of Mirns, to share no less in the gain than in the toil of living. The optimism which characterised both George and himself was born of a certainty that his mission was true. To him the axioms of the Single Tax not merely represented the sum of his whole industrial experience, but were the truest description of the economic realities that lie at the bottom of social appearance. Had it been objected to him that these axioms were too simple for the facts they attempted to describe, Joseph would have replied that Truth is, in its nature, a simple thing; it is, he once said, the "rediscovery of the obvious." He believed that social complexity was simply the child of social ill. It was the product of centuries of accumulated economic error. Once we returned to the working of what he called natural law, once we restored to man what was his by right, economists

would find that social life would proceed simply, because it would proceed justly. To him, the application of Henry George's doctrine meant the restoration of man's natural right. If men are to possess happiness they must have access to the means of life.

Joseph had always a deep interest in the opposition to the Single Tax, and his correspondence, no less than his speeches, is full of comments on its nature. To the argument which has latterly found favour with the most academic and distinguished of his antagonists, that the Single Tax means the abolition of a system of protection to home industries, he would have replied that there was nothing he so ardently desired. It was not only, as he judged, that a protected industry was a parasitic industry, and thus an industry never standing on its own feet by virtue of its native strength, but what to his cosmopolitan temper was far more serious, a protective system was supremely hostile to international fellowship. He pointed out, again and again, that a nation's trade was the expression of a nation's mind, that the more closely nations enjoy commercial intercourse, the more do they come to understand each other. Free Trade, as Cobden—whom he was proud to acclaim as a supporter of the Single Tax—saw,

was thus a means of spreading friendship. By breaking down isolation, it broke down misunderstanding, than which there was no more fertile cause of war.

Perhaps the argument which most puzzled him was the somewhat curious plea that the Single Tax was dangerous because, while the object of the budget is to balance expenditure and revenue, it may produce a surplus. The fear of this surplus he could never understand, because he knew how immense were the communal needs to which it could be appropriated. As he once replied to a questioner, on education alone he would be willing and prepared to spend tenfold the present appropriation. "We have not yet begun to exploit the nation's abilities," he said to a friend, "and we can sink plenty of money in finding them out." Indeed, it was his eager anxiety to put the plans he cherished into action which made him desirous of increasing the income of the State.

He was often told that the Single Tax was fallacious because it over-simplified the problem of assessment. People were fond of quoting to him cases where property had been rated either too high or too low as evidence that a true valuation was impossible. But to him this was to neglect the whole point at issue. The advocate of the

Single Tax takes as the basis of his estimate the selling value of any piece of land, which is sufficiently easy to ascertain.

There is a last group of objections with which Joseph was frequently confronted. He was sometimes accused of sowing class hatred, because he proposed to tax only the land-owning class of the community. It was once urged to him that the payment of taxation confers a sense of social responsibility which the Single Tax would destroy. It gives a certain stake in the community which promotes good government. It was, again, represented to him that the evils borne by the peasantry of France under the ancient régime were largely brought home to them by the unjust burden of taxation they were compelled to bear. Inequitable taxation roused America to revolution. The history of English liberty is a history of a struggle to control the revenue. So that, in this view, taxation ought, almost of necessity, to be unfairly imposed to arouse a people to a keener sense of its wrongs. It is curious to find Joseph denounced as a promoter of hatred. Perhaps more than any other man who took part in the stress and heat of the great social conflict of his time did he have an abiding sense of the ultimate unity of which men are capable. If he cried out against the

landowners it was because they retarded its realisation. It was because they prevented the promotion of economic fraternity that he was assured of their danger to the State.

To the argument that to abolish taxation is to destroy a sense of social responsibility, he made answer that the spirit taxation breeds is not the spirit that makes a State endure; for him it was tainted with compulsion and was therefore a barrier in the way of freedom. Unjust taxation, he once said, did not cause the American Revolution, but the repression those taxes symbolised. No one can understand the basic motives of his life who does not realise how much of his intense faith in the teaching of Henry George came from this hatred of bondage. The prophecy of eternal poverty was to him a doctrine of eternal damnation. He had to fight against it, because, as he said again and again, there was no other fight worth while.

In every man and woman he saw a possible crusader. He made no apology for urging their assistance; he could not understand a lack of enthusiasm for his ideal. If anything in the world aroused in him a sense of bitter antagonism—and it was rarely he could be so aroused—it was the sight of satisfied men and women. "So keen am

"I in the opinion that we are doing great things these days," he wrote to a friend shortly before his death, "that, at the risk of making myself a nuisance, I am approaching every man who I believe has money, and whom I know to have a heart." It is thus that great movements are made.

It has been pointed out how deeply his business experience confirmed him in his belief. Often he expressed his amazement that the government of cities and nations should be carried on with so little regard for business principles. "Election to a public office," he wrote, "seems to denude a man of all his business acumen and cause him to forget all the sound methods which are essential to success in the commercial world." It troubled him to see a system of taxation which had simply grown up by accident, in which there was neither method nor principle. He believed that this confusion lay at the root of public indifference to social questions. Men did not study the problems of communal life, simply because an artificial complexity made them seem dull by depriving them of their real vitality. "If a business man is asked," he said, "what principle is adopted in raising the revenue of his city, he will either be quite nonplussed, or else he will blurt out that ancient shibboleth, ability to pay. Imagine him trying to

carry on his business on these lines, and yet that is the method we are told to adopt in taxation." This fact made him eager to preach the doctrine to business men. He believed that with them it would make the greatest progress because it was, as he urged, in accordance "with sound and honest business principles." It should make a practical and immediate appeal to manufacturer and worker alike. As he once expressed it, "it is the key that opens the door of their common interests."

This, then, was the economic system Joseph believed in, assuredly no dismal science. He tried to see simply and truly the path that lay ahead. He knew that his belief ran directly counter to accepted tradition. He knew that it cut at the root of convention and prejudice. It might be that realisation would lie far beyond his time, but his courage never wavered, because what he had he knew to be the truth.

Chapter XII

The Contest with the Leisured Class

THE objective of all Mr. Fels' later activities was to bring about a thorough discussion of the taxation of land values on the platform, in the Press, and in Parliament. In Britain a particularly favourable opportunity for action had arrived. A new Government had come into office in 1906, with a majority greater than that possessed by any previous Ministry. Its head, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, had been for many years sympathetically disposed towards the movement. In the House of Commons itself the group of land-taxers was, numerically at any rate, more powerful than it had ever been before. Joseph soon won his way into their confidence. He had no personal axe to grind, no party affiliations to embarrass. He simply wanted to help in any way in which practical service could be rendered. He travelled much, speaking continually; he wrote to the Press, interviewed Members of Parliament, and entertained in that social fashion which makes half the legislation of Great Britain. His city office became a kind of campaigning centre where invariably a little group of enthusiasts was to be found.

At the end of 1908, when the unemployed agitation was at its height, the "Right to Work" National Council called a united conference, composed of representatives of Municipal and Local Authorities, Labour, Socialist, and other progressive bodies. It was held in the Guildhall, London, and the proceedings were opened by the Lord Mayor. The Chairmen of the Conference were the Rev. Prebendary Russell Wakefield—now Bishop of Birmingham—John H. Lile, Esq., J.P., C.C., and J. Keir Hardie, M.P. Among those who represented the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values was Mr. Fels. As is usual at such Congresses, the resolutions proposed were varied and numerous, ranging from a demand for the Government to recognise its responsibility to provide work for every unemployed citizen, to the limitation of the hours of labour, the provision of meals and clothing for necessitous children, a grant of £1,000,000 to assist the Distress Committees and other agencies engaged in Relief Works, &c.

At the date fixed for the Conference, Joseph had arranged to leave London for the United States, but he determined to be present in order to press the reform, which in his judgment was of more practical value than any of the resolutions on

the agenda. His, perhaps, was one of the shortest speeches to which the Conference listened, but it made up for its brevity by its directness.

The Chairman of the day, Mr. Keir Hardie, M.P., knowing that Joseph was about to leave on his journey to America, called upon him to address the Conference. Mr. H. M. Hyndman, then leader of the Social Democratic Party, rose and demanded to know "who and what Mr. Fels represented." The Chairman replied, "Mr. Fels represents the United Committee for the Taxation of Land Values, an organisation that has been invited to send delegates." His right to address the Conference having been established, he at once went to the root of the matter.

"My interest, I am frank to say," he declared, "is the socialisation of the public means of support. I am a disciple of Henry George. I follow him as closely as I know how. To me nothing has so much value in all the resolutions on the agenda, whether they be called practical or remedial, as that which asks that drastic legislation for taxing land values should be put into operation." (Hear, hear.) "You may be interested to know that, within a 'bus or tram ride of the Bank of England, there are 10,000 acres of land lying idle. That is enough land if cultivated under intelli-

gent superintendence to support 8,000 families. The Vacant Land Cultivation Society has in London 250 families now being partially supported on the 40 or 50 acres we have been able to get. What we have been able to do with that 40 or 50 acres of land has so astonished me that I beg this Conference to insist upon the Government putting into effect the taxation of land values. This would produce millions of pounds sterling. There is a large amount of land that can be used by somebody. The landlords are not using it, but the unemployed people, of whom there are vast numbers and on whose behalf we are assembled here to-day, could make use of it. The task before this Conference is to find a solution for the problem of unemployment. There is only one solution, the provision of profitable work. Relief work is useless; it is simply making holes and filling them up again. The most profitable labour is labour that is reproductive, than which none is more important and valuable than the cultivation of land. There is, as I have said, plenty of land, but the trouble is that the people cannot get the use of it. How can the obstacles be removed? The surest way of forcing the land of this country into cultivation is by taxing it. It will not then pay the holders to keep it idle for speculative purposes, or as mere sporting

grounds for the pleasures of the rich. I am a landlord myself, and yet I want my land to be taxed, as it should be, up to 20s. in the £, because I know what the effect will be. I am willing to start with 1s. in the £. (Hear, hear.) One shilling will produce millions. (Applause.) I am convinced that before you can get any permanent cure for the unemployed problem you must tax land values."

Mr. H. M. Hyndman : " That is the capitalists' last ditch."

Mr. Fels : " Thank you; I am a capitalist, and so are you. (Laughter.) But being a capitalist does not prevent my seeing the evils of monopoly, or my desire to free men from its power, and I therefore hope that those here who believe in the principle of land taxation will support an amendment to Resolution No. 7. The resolution states :—

" That drastic legislation for taxing land values and for enabling public authorities to compulsorily acquire land on the most favourable terms is urgently needed to bring all land into useful and productive occupation."

" I, of course, support the demand for ' drastic legislation for taxing land values,' but we all know that simply passing resolutions counts for very little in the estimation of the average politician. This very question has formed the basis for academic

discussion for years. What I want is to see it done. And there is an easy way of doing it, as indicated by my amendment, which I move as an addition to the resolution as follows :—

“ And that the Chancellor of the Exchequer be requested to put the taxation of Land Values in the next Budget.”

The resolution, as amended, was carried with cheers, and Joseph hurried off to Liverpool, *en route* for New York, happy in the knowledge that a practical proposal had been made. It was one that received Government recognition sooner, perhaps, than many of those present believed to be possible.

In 1909 came what was in a sense the turning-point of Joseph's career. The chapter of political history which led up to and culminated in the Budget of that year is sufficiently well known. It represented the fruition of the new Liberalism. It had been many years since the taxation of land values had received, in the famous Newcastle programme, the official recognition of the Liberal Party. Every Liberal leader of importance during the long period of opposition had given at least lip service, and some of them, like Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, seemed ready to meet its claims in full. The party, however, continued to be

dominated by the old guard with its Whig tendencies and Gladstonian descent. It circled about the time-honoured policies of Free Trade, Disestablishment, and Home Rule. Measures of social reform were incidental and tentative. Liberalism had to find itself after coming into power. Gradually, however, the new elements began to emerge and take first place. The problems of dense population and the intensifying industrial struggle could not be solved by the Gladstonian formulæ. The discontent of labour, now vocal in the House of Commons, was ever more ominous.

The day had arrived for live issues handled by live men. Mr. Lloyd George placed himself at the head of the Liberal democracy and led an attack upon the very stronghold of privilege. Whether or not its consequences may be obliterated by the war, the Budget of 1909 will always stand as the acme of Liberal achievement, co-ordinate with the establishment of Free Trade. What the Budget actually proposed was little enough, but the principle which it involved will without doubt achieve a social revolution. A land tax was to be introduced which differentiated, for the purposes of assessment, between the site value and the improvement value of land. A new valuation was made necessary which would give the people the first

understanding they had had since 1690 of what the land was worth and its possibilities as a source of revenue.

But the most important result of the Budget was that the eyes of the elector were opened to the meaning of the Single Tax. Joseph began to make preparations for a campaign of unprecedented magnitude; the measure was not Single Tax; it was far from what he desired. But it was the thin end of the wedge. It marked the beginning of a statutory recognition of the land tax principle, and as such was given the strongest support of the United Committee and all believers in the Single Tax.

An amazing outburst of opposition was provoked by the measure. The House of Lords, as guardian of privilege and representative of the leisured class, decided to stake its very existence as a legislative power on this struggle. If there had ever been doubt as to the importance of a land tax, the determined resistance of the Lords showed it to be the conviction of privilege that the enactment of this principle into law pointed the way to its doom. "Anyone would have thought," Joseph once exclaimed, "that Mr. Lloyd George proposed to consign the members of the House of Lords to the workhouse."

The opposition was well organised. The whole

power and tradition of privilege were invoked to secure the defeat of the measure. It was not without success that the Unionist Party endeavoured to shift the burden of conflict from the tax problem to the constitutional question of whether the House of Lords had the right to reject a Money Bill. Leagues were formed to protest against the Budget. From the beginning to the end of the fight Mr. Fels gave practical expression of his sympathy. He has even been accused of being the chief provider of munitions for the campaign. Although the Land Taxation proposals in the Budget merely touched the fringe of the question, and were utterly inadequate from his point of view, he felt that they marked an era in constructive legislation. He liberally supported the great demonstration in London, which did as much to revive the determination of the Liberal Ministry as it did to overawe the opponents of the measure.

He was convinced that nothing was so important as to awaken the people to an understanding of the possibilities which that measure contained. There have been few elections in British political history the issue of which has been more significant, and upon which the attention of the whole world was more clearly focussed, than that of 1910. It returned the Liberals to power with a mandate not

only to pass the land clauses of the Finance Bill, but to end once for all the veto power of the House of Lords. It was the first concerted attack on the non-producing class. To Joseph Fels, a democrat, that was not its least achievement.

He saw that the whole system derives from and centres in that apex of the social order, the not inconsiderable group who own the land and therefore the people. He felt no animus against the persons concerned, it was the system he was against. The rent roll for them is an inexorable determinant of their existence. Often a lad leaves Oxford with an imagination stimulated by the world he faces and resentful that life can never have for him the flavour of a great adventure, that his hands can never know the joy of making and shaping things. The social scheme determined his course from the day he was born, and not many years are needed to settle him in acquiescence and maintenance of the system. The class is, of course, being constantly increased by the possessors of newly-made fortunes. Their admission to the ranks of "Society" is for some time resented, but the economic factor on which the whole scheme rests is all-determining, and no rich man can be for long excluded in spite of the vulgarity which his wealth derives from recent contact with the toil-stained.

It is refreshing to know at least one rich man who played the rôle badly. Mr. Fels was never able to see that the humanity beneath a greasy engineer's suit was essentially different from his own. He could never bring himself to believe that it did not matter whether poor children were fed or not. He knew that if the struggling masses had their due there would be no great fortunes to expend on carriages, flunkeys, great houses, expensive dress, and charitable subscriptions. Directness of vision and honesty of principle made impossible for him participation in the great masquerade. Behind the array of conventional pretence he recognised the sordid form of the world's greatest injustice. A leisured class rides upon the backs of the poor. The community which displays great luxury displays a corresponding degree of privation; the counterpart of the palace is the hovel. To enable any individual to flaunt his wealth, numbers are doomed to grinding toil. Confronted with this situation, the course of an honest man is simple. One accepts the situation or one does not. Joseph did not.

Chapter XIII

Personal Propaganda

THE great value of the 1910 Budget for Mr. Fels was that its principle when fully applied would give opportunity to those desiring work, and would force the idle class to do some useful work. It would mark, as he said, "the greatest national industrial revival that the world has ever witnessed." For the very unequal distribution of labour comes about through the monopolisation by the few of resources that, rightly used, would be communal. "The tax," he told an audience in Portland, Oregon, U.S.A., "will be taken off industry and thrift and labour, all of which will be stimulated. Monopoly will be taxed out of existence, for all monopoly is founded on land. Competition will be free . . . the leisured classes are against the land tax reform because it will destroy their monopoly in land." He explained how the trusts of the United States would be affected by such a measure. "There is the oil trust. If it had to pay taxes on its great oil and gas fields at their real value, and not just as waste lands, how long would it hold them out of the market, unproductive? It would produce all the oil it could sell, and kerosene would be cheap

to the poor man and gasoline to the automobile owner. The trust would have to sell the lands it was unable to use, and there would no longer be a monopoly in oil."

That the working out of the Budget was a failure Joseph would have been the first to admit. The reason of that failure seemed to him sufficiently simple. When the administration of its principles came to be applied, there was a lack of courage for which he had scarcely been prepared. "He is not really a land-tax man," he wrote of Mr. Lloyd George three years later, when in 1913 he abandoned the Land Tax clause in the amending Revenue Bill. By so doing, Mr. Lloyd George had, in his view, failed at the critical moment to apply consistently the principles in which he had previously declared his belief. As also when he so framed the details of the Budget as to make possible endless delay and litigation. Mr. Fels himself would have no agreement with a policy which made valuation dependent upon the decision of a court. The assessment, he contended, should be made once and for all by Government experts without what he called "the fanatical appeal to a court prejudiced beforehand" against the principle the Budget was intended to establish. It was to him a disappointment that so fair

a promise should have issued in so meagre a fulfilment.

Whatever disappointment he felt was lost in the activities which made more and more demands on his time. Any chronological record of his movements after 1909 becomes practically impossible. Roughly, it is true to say that half the year was spent by him in Great Britain and half in America. But there were two long Continental visits when he braved the difficulties of language and tried to stimulate the organisation of the Single Tax movement in Denmark, France, Sweden, Germany, Italy, and Spain. He sailed for the United States late in 1909 on the eve of the general election in Great Britain, and there spoke in many places in explanation of the British Budget. He toured through most of the Middle West of the United States. In the winter (1910) he was speaking throughout the Southern States. In 1911-12 he toured through Canada and the Far West. His time was filled with tireless activity. He wrote countless letters, considered schemes of propaganda, visited anyone from whom there was the hope of assistance. He did not hesitate to expose himself to rebuff if he felt that eventually he might be able to effect some good. He even approached Mr. Carnegie twice in a single year, trying, of

course vainly, to convince that unsparing philanthropist that his right hand was endeavouring to re-erect what his left hand had destroyed. He attended congresses, meetings, lectures, debates. He sought out the prominent men of any town he visited and attempted their conversion.

He denounced the rich, including himself, unsparingly. "We can't get rich," he told a Chicago audience, "under present conditions, without robbing somebody. I have done it; you are doing it now, and I am still doing it. But I am proposing to spend the money to wipe out the system by which I made it." This speech created no small sensation and he was asked for an explanation of his remarks; but he had nothing to explain. Under a system which placed a premium on economic exploitation, it was simply impossible for a man to make money on a large scale by fair dealing. "People listen to me," he told an interviewer, "when I say this, because I am a rich man. Many a poor man has said exactly the same thing and suffered imprisonment for so doing."

Interesting episodes abound in connection with his persistent propaganda. In London, on one occasion, he persuaded a famous American statesman to visit the offices of the United Committee

for the Taxation of Land Values, and the account of the interview he gave is as follows :

“ I consider him,” he wrote, “ an ignoramus on our question, and think he is working too much on the preaching track to be an open-eyed public man. I went to see him at Claridge’s Hotel and talked with him for about an hour and a half. He knows nothing about the land question, or, at any rate, does not show it by his talk. Finally, as he said Tom L. Johnson had insisted that he should see John Paul, the secretary of the United Committee, I took him to the offices the next morning. . . . After a little general talk, he was asked a couple of questions. The first he tried to answer, but got so mixed that he grabbed the telephone, called up the hotel, and asked to be connected with his wife’s room, when he inquired of her whether the man had come, and then said he would be there in fifteen minutes. He thereupon jumped up, shook hands with all of us, and slipped out.”

It is not difficult to understand why Mr. Fels refused to be bound by the ordinary ties of political association.

An incident in a public meeting called to consider the Budget is not without interest. A discussion on the Single Tax had taken place and questions were asked. The following interlude occurred :

A Major-General, who occupied a front seat and had followed the procedure with close interest, said, “ Gentle-

men, to get the matter through, I am a proprietor of some waste land, and I would like to know what to do with it. I don't think it would be right to tax it."

MR. HEMMERDE : " What sort of waste land? "

GENERAL : " Land of no value."

MR. HEMMERDE : " If it is of no value then the tax would not hit it."

GENERAL : " I understood that you proposed that all land should be taxed."

MR. HEMMERDE : " I know of a case of waste land rated at 4s. and 5s. an acre, and when the local authorities bought it they had to pay £1,000 per acre. We would like to know if the piece of waste land referred to has any rateable value."

GENERAL : " No, it does not produce anything."

MR. HEMMERDE : " Could it produce anything? "

GENERAL : " No. I want to know what to do with it. I understood you proposed that the whole of the land should be taxed."

MR. HEMMERDE : " Certainly."

GENERAL : " And that all land has a value."

MR. FELS : " Would you give it to anyone who wanted it? "

GENERAL : " No."

MR. HEMMERDE : " We could get the surveyor of taxes to put a value on it."

GENERAL : " I would say it was valueless. It does not produce anything."

MR. HEMMERDE : " It must have some value, or you would not wish to keep it."

GENERAL : " I like to look at it." (Laughter.)

MR. FELS : " Suppose someone else was prepared to put it to use in addition to looking at it, would you let them have it? "

GENERAL : " No."

MR. FELS : " May I ask whether you have ever received an offer for the land? "

GENERAL : " No."

MR. FELS : " Would you take £1 an acre for it? "

GENERAL : " No. It doesn't produce anything. I don't want to part with it."

MR. FELS : " Would you take £2 an acre? "

GENERAL : " I don't want to sell it."

MR. FELS : " Would you take £5 an acre for a plot in the centre of it? "

GENERAL : " I don't want to sell it."

MR. FELS : " Would you take £20? "

GENERAL : " I don't want to sell it. I like to look at it."

MR. FELS : " Then it has a value." (Loud laughter.)

There could hardly have been a more apt illustration of what the Budget was to effect.

Almost equally characteristic was a letter Joseph wrote to a wealthy American who criticised his propaganda. The American may be named Brown.

“ My Dear Brown,—

“ I have held yours until I cooled down, because there are some things in it that are not fair to yourself. My state of mind has cooled; here is what I have to say, not from the rich man to his fellow rich man, but from the naked Joseph Fels to the naked John Brown.

“ You freely say that the economic philosophy of Henry George is a practical and just method of taxation and deserves the support of all right-minded men, and that the introduction of the Single Tax is one of the greatest tasks to be undertaken.

“ You then go on to say that you would like to help me more, but cannot except at times by writing upon the subject, because, being no longer a young man, you have not the power and strength that you had in bygone days. You also refer to other responsibilities which, you tell me, ‘ weigh heavily upon you.’ You wind up this particular paragraph of your letter by saying that the Lloyd George Insurance Bill absorbs you.

“ The above are your reasons for not helping financially, though what your age and interest in the Insurance Bill have to do with the matter I cannot conceive.

“ Now let us see where the responsibility of age and the Insurance Bill will defeat the thing you freely acknowledge as one of the best in the world. You are a millionaire, have always been a millionaire, so far as I know, and perhaps as long as you can remember. You live, when in London, at a swell hotel, keep a motor-car, private secre-

tary, and other more or less useful adjuncts to a rich man, including the hobnobbing with other rich men, which, of course, means a large expenditure of money. In New York you live at the —— Hotel, as you tell me, which, I take it, means \$100 a week. You perhaps spend in luxuries \$50,000. To you they may not be luxuries because you have never known anything else, but they are luxuries to me and to others who have a conception of the right use of money.

“ You got your money—as I freely acknowledge I got mine—through one or other of the various monopolies and special privileges. You play with the matter of charity and philanthropy, and try to comfort your immortal soul and stifle your conscience with the idea that you are doing something. Well, you are! You are making matters worse, and it won’t matter much to the world in general.

“ Now I am looking for millionaires, and I prefer American millionaires. I want each one of them to put up \$100,000 a year to help to free men, and make such as you and myself impossible. . . .

“ My dear Brown, had you not better tear the veil from your eyes? It is a simple process. Just look at yourself in the clear light of truth and personal responsibility. I am fully aware that this letter may lose me an acquaintance, but I am not pleading for you to help *me*. I am pleading for you to help *men*.”

To Mr. Carnegie Joseph wrote on June 21, 1910, as follows:

“ Andrew Carnegie, Esq.,

“ Skibo Castle, N.B.

“ My dear Sir,—

“ An item in the enclosed paper has just caught my eye. Are the statements therein correct? If so, your memory is a little short, you and I having met some five years ago at Charing Cross Station by appointment, as I was then anxious to interest you in the farm labour colony movement here which I was then promoting. I need hardly say that I was promoting that movement to create land hunger, and not because I considered the establishment of such colonies a cure for the poverty question!

“ Taking it for granted that you are correctly reported, I plead guilty to the charge that my object is nothing more nor less than the Single Tax according to the Henry George philosophy; but it is not in a resuscitated form at all, as Henry George was never more alive than at present, even though no longer with us in the flesh.

“ I am glad to note that you knew George, and that you appreciated his integrity. I hope, however, you are not correctly reported in the statement that you could never see anything but absurdity in the Single Tax, for I have heretofore given you credit for having brains of quite an unusual character.

“ I have no doubt that George was highly appreciative of the fact that you told him his philosophy was impossible of being carried out in the States, but am

equally sure he did not agree with you, as we have carried the fight for his philosophy into one of the States of the Union where the American farmer predominates, and, in my opinion, we shall have a large measure of the Single Tax in that State in 1912—I refer to Oregon, which is really as important an agricultural State as Iowa, which you are reported to have said that George invaded, but that his views were so ridiculed by the people as to cause him to conclude that his campaign was useless. I don't believe this, either! No work done anywhere at any time for furthering the cause of economic freedom was ever hopeless; and you, of all men, should know this, seeing that you have done so much to make it hopeless, without succeeding in breaking down the courage of the common people.

“I do not doubt that your hobby lies in free libraries, though these ‘free’ libraries are perhaps not so free as you would like to believe, as all I know of are a permanent charge on the local rates, and, to this extent, are not free, but are a noose around the necks of the common people, for which they will yet rise and curse you—indeed, they have in many cases already done so.

“I do not doubt that, during the money panic in New York, you could have made an extra \$50,000,000, but I can hardly be asked to respect your reason for not making it! Somebody else probably made it, and did his share towards further choking the freedom of the people!

“Your frank expression of want of sympathy for the

so-called submerged tenth is in keeping with the balance of the statements in the enclosed article. Of course, you have little sympathy with the submerged tenth. Indeed, I do not know of anyone who has expressed his soft impeachment of your sentiments in this connection, and I am confirmed in this by the fact that you have done so much during your life to submerge so large a proportion of the tenth. I am, too, not insensible to your sympathy with the swimming tenth, who, as you say, are striving to help themselves; but this is only carrying out your own philosophy, as you belong to the swimming tenth of those who have risen on the backs of their fellows.

“Natural laws do, in the end, control such matters, as you well say, but they control them in quite a different way from that which you are so much in the habit of propagating.

“You make an absolute misstatement, however, in saying that the deserving rise out of their poverty, and save their own respect from the mire. Are you not really talking through your hat in making such a misstatement, when you, as a man long immersed in monopoly and special privilege, must know that the submerged tenth (indeed, in Great Britain, the submerged third) is submerged by monopoly and special privilege; I refer especially to land monopoly.

“Just recall a portion of your own life, and the thousands—yea, tens of thousands!—of men, women, and children you have done so much to submerge; recall the

Homestead strikes and the hundreds of labour wars in which you and your companies were, and are still, engaged!

“ You will answer this by saying that you are no longer in business; but that is hardly a correct way of putting it, seeing that you converted your monopolies into 5 per cent. bonds, and still draw your interest from the sufferings of men, women, and children. The fact that you have made 50 or 100 men of your own build millionaires merely adds to the agony by spreading the suffering, and the only way you can remedy the matter is to stop spreading suffering by putting your money and your great abilities to the task of destroying the power of one man, or set of men to stamp under foot the liberty and free will of thousands of other men.

“ The economic philosophy of Henry George is now a living issue in the world—and not an inconsequential exhibit of it—and in last year’s British Budget the land valuation clauses may even touch your own pocket through Skibo Castle and all the enterprises or investments in which you may have an interest in Great Britain.

“ In conclusion, I am writing you this letter direct, instead of spreading it in the pages of newspapers, and I do so in the hope that you will write me fearlessly and frankly; and, if I have made a single charge in this letter which is not well within the truth, I will personally apologise to you and withdraw the part that is untrue.

“ Yours very truly,
(Signed) “ JOSEPH FELS.”

A second letter was sent six months later, shortly after Mr. Carnegie had made his gift of ten million dollars to the International Peace Foundation. Joseph wrote to him pointing out what he conceived to be the fatal effect of the method of peace propaganda pursued by Mr. Carnegie, as follows:—

“ You have given ten million dollars to an international peace fund. The object is worthy. The donor’s intentions are good. But a worthy object and a good intention cannot alone make a gift a real benefaction. Donations, no matter how large, to suppress evils, no matter how great, can accomplish nothing unless they should be used to remove the fundamental cause of the evils.

“ Aggressive warfare is always the result of what appears to be an economic necessity. The last great war, that between Russia and Japan, will serve as an illustration. These two nations fought over the possession of Korea. Russia wanted Korea because she felt the need of a sea-port accessible all the year round, that she might be able to export and import merchandise freely without being bothered with any tariff restrictions other than those of her own making. Japan felt that her independence would be threatened—that is, she realised that her refusal to trade freely with the rest of the world would create a temptation for other nations sufficiently strong to deprive her of independence.

“ If conditions of absolute international free trade had

prevailed, Russia would no more have felt the lack of an accessible seaport than does the State of Ohio. If Japan maintained no custom houses, the Power that would try to rob her of her independence would have nothing to gain and very much to lose. Henry George made this clear in his *Protection or Free Trade*.

“ ‘What,’ he wrote, ‘are the real substantial advantages of this Union of ours? Are they not summed up in the absolute freedom of trade which it secures, and the community of interests that grows out of this freedom? If our States were fighting each other with hostile tariffs and a citizen could not cross a State boundary line without having his baggage searched, or a book printed in New York could not be sent across the river to Jersey City until duty was paid, how long would our Union last, or what would it be worth? The true benefits of our Union, the true basis of the inter-State peace it secures, is that it has prevented the establishment of State tariffs, and given us free trade over the better part of a continent.’

“ ‘The ‘need of foreign markets’ which is so frequently used as an argument to justify wars of criminal aggression is a ‘need’ that would not be felt if the aggressing nation enforced justice at home. Our own war in the Philippines would not have received popular endorsement but for the false hopes of ‘new foreign markets’ held out to commercial interests. This bait was held out and was swallowed, in spite of the fact that potential new markets exist here at home.

“The unemployed and partially employed population and the underpaid workers form a potential market far greater than any war of conquest could secure. To secure this new market, labour need but be given access to the natural resources now withheld by private monopolists. The vacant and the partially-used city lots, and the valuable mining and agricultural lands held out of use for speculation, are causing poverty, unemployment, and low wages. The result is under-consumption of manufactured products, which manufacturers and merchants are bamboozled into believing can be relieved by forcing the people of weaker nations to purchase.

“Then, again, the interests which dragged the United States into the disgraceful Philippine adventure would not and could not have succeeded in doing so, had not the existence of land monopoly at home made it evident that the same institution would surely be continued by our Government in the Philippines.

“Will the Carnegie Fund be used to any extent in abolishing land monopoly, thus checking any possible repetition of successful appeals to commercial cupidity in support of land-grabbing schemes abroad? Hardly.

“A gift of ten millions to secure relief from malaria in a swampy district which could not be used to secure the draining of the swamps or the destruction of the mosquitoes would be just as effective as your peace donation.”

It goes without saying that Mr. Fels' advice was disregarded; we cannot even find that his

letter received a reply. Perhaps, as he suggested, he had made a proposal too radical even for a retired millionaire. But it was not only with the powerful that his enormous correspondence in these years concerned itself.

Some further correspondence in connection with a request for financial assistance is worthy of record. It shows that Joseph never lost an opportunity to enforce fundamental principles, or to make it clear that he had no desire to pose as a philanthropist. It also demonstrates how broad-based was his own religious belief.

“ ————— Theological School.

“ Mr. Joseph Fels, Philadelphia, Pa.

“ Dear Sir,—Having read much of you and your many acts of charity and philanthropy, I write to ask for a donation from you for our institution.

“ It may seem strange that I ask this of one who is not of our faith, yet I have read in some of your speeches that you make no distinction of race, creed, or colour, and that you regard all men as your brothers; that you believe in the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God. Thus you are teaching what our institution teaches, and our school is doing as best it can with limited means the work you are trying to do.

“ We are sadly in need of money. Many young men who wish to enter our school and prepare themselves to teach the Gospel of Christ are without means to pay their

board and buy books, and our means are so limited that we cannot help them. These young men, trained in our school to preach the Gospel, would, many of them, be fitted to carry the Word to the heathen of foreign lands, and thus be instrumental in dispelling the darkness that reigns among millions of our brethren in other lands.

"Can you not help us? What would be a very little to you would be a great deal to us, and might be the means of saving many souls.

"Yours respectfully,

"_____, _____, _____,

"Dean."

To this request Joseph replied :

"Rev. _____

"Dean _____ Theological School.

"Dear Sir,—

"Replying to your communication, I am at a loss to know where you have read of my 'acts of charity and philanthropy.' I am not a philanthropist and give nothing to charity.

"When you say I am not of your 'faith' I suppose you mean of your creed. Let me state my faith and we can see wherein we differ.

"I believe in the Fatherhood of God, and therefore in the Brotherhood of Man. By 'Man' I mean all men. So far I suppose we agree?

"I believe that the Creator freely gave the earth to all of His children that all may have equal rights to its use. Do you agree to that?

"I believe that the injunction 'in the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread' necessarily implies 'Thou shalt not eat bread in the sweat of thy brother's brow.' Do you agree?"

"I believe that all are violating the Divine law who live in idleness on wealth produced by others, since they eat bread in the sweat of their brothers' brows. Do you agree to that?"

"I believe that no man should have power to take wealth he has not produced or earned unless freely given to him by the producer. Do you agree?"

"I believe that Brotherhood requires giving an equivalent for every service received from a brother. Do you agree?"

"I believe it is blasphemous to assert or insinuate that God has condemned some of his children to hopeless poverty and to the crimes, want, and misery resulting therefrom, and has at the same time awarded to others lives of ease and luxury without labour. Do you agree?"

"I believe that involuntary poverty and involuntary idleness are unnatural and are due to the denial by some of the rights of others to use freely the gifts of God to all. Do you agree?"

"Since labour products are needed to sustain life and since labour must be applied to land in order to produce, I believe that every child comes into life with Divine permission to use land without the consent of any other child of God. Do you agree?"

"Where men congregate in organised society, land has

a value apart from the value of things produced by labour; as population and industry increase, the value of land increases, but the value of labour products does not. That increase in land value is community-made value. Inasmuch as your power to labour is a gift of God all the wealth produced by your labour is yours, and no man nor collection of men has a right to take any of it from you. Do you agree to that?

“I believe the community-made value of land belongs to the community just as the wealth produced by you belongs to you. Do you agree to that?

“Therefore I believe that the fundamental evil, the great God-denying crime of society, is the iniquitous system under which men are permitted to put in their pockets—confiscate, in fact—the community-made values of land, while organised society confiscates for public purposes a part of the wealth created by individuals. Do you agree to that?

“Using a concrete illustration: I own in the City of Philadelphia $11\frac{1}{2}$ acres of land, for which I paid \$32,500 a few years ago. On account of increase of population and industry in Philadelphia that land is now worth about \$125,000. I have expended no labour or money upon it. So I have done nothing to cause that increase of \$92,500 in a few years. My fellow-citizens in Philadelphia created it, and I believe it therefore belongs to them, not to me. I believe that the man-made law which gives to me and other landlords values we have not created is a violation of Divine law. I believe that Justice de-

mands that these community-made values be taken by the community for common purposes instead of taxing enterprise and industry. Do you agree?

“That is my creed, my faith, my religion. Do you teach that, or anything like it, in your theological school? If not, why not? I have a right to ask since you have asked me for money. If you agree to my propositions but do not teach them, tell me why. If I am in error, show me in what respect.

“I am using all the money I have to teach my creed, my faith, my religion as best I can. I am using it as best I know how to abolish the Hell of civilisation, which is want and fear of want. I am using it to bring in the will of our Father, to establish the Brotherhood of man by giving each of my brothers an equal opportunity to have and use the gifts of our Father. Am I misusing that money? If so, why and how?

“If my teaching is wrong and contrary to true religion I want to know it. I take it that if you are not teaching religion in its fulness you wish to know it. Am I correct?

“What I teach may be criticised as mixing politics with religion, but can I be successfully attacked on that ground? Politics, in its true meaning, is the science of government. Is government a thing entirely apart from religion or from righteousness? Is not just government founded upon right doing?

“If my religion is true, if it accords with the basic principles of morality taught by Jesus, how is it possible

for your school to teach Christianity when it ignores the science of government? Or is your school so different from other theological schools that it does teach the fundamental moral principles upon which men associate themselves in organised government?

“Do you question the relation between taxation and righteousness? Let us see. If government is a natural growth, then surely God’s natural law provides food and sustenance for government as that food is needed; for where in Nature do we find a creature coming into the world without timely provision of natural food for it? It is in our system of taxation that we find the most emphatic denial of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, because, first, in order to meet our common needs, we take from individuals what does not belong to us in common; second, we permit individuals to take for themselves what does belong to us in common; and thus, third, under the pretext of taxation for public purposes, we have established a system that permits some men to tax other men for private profit.

“Does not that violate the natural, the Divine law? Does it not surely beget wolfish greed on the one hand and gaunt poverty on the other? Does it not surely breed millionaires on one end of the social scale and tramps on the other end? Has it not brought into civilisation a hell of which the savage can have no conception? Could any better system be devised for convincing men that God is the father of a few and the stepfather of the many? Is not that destructive of the sentiment of Brotherhood?

With such a condition, how is it possible for men in masses to obey the new commandment 'that ye love one another'? What could more surely thrust men apart, what could more surely divide them into warring classes?

"You say that you need money to train young men and fit them 'to carry the Word to the heathen of foreign lands, and thus be instrumental in dispelling the darkness that reigns among millions of our brethren in other lands.' That is a noble purpose. But what message would your school give to these young men to take to the benighted brethren that would stand a fire of questions from an intelligent heathen? Suppose, for example, your school sends to some pagan country an intelligent young man who delivers his message; and suppose an intelligent man in the audience asks these questions:—

"You come from America, where your religion has been taught for about 400 years, where every small village has one of your churches, and the great cities have scores upon scores. Do all the people attend these churches? Do your countrymen generally practise what you preach to us? Does even a considerable minority practise it? Are your laws consistent with or contrary to the religion you preach to us? Are your cities clean morally in proportion to the number of churches they contain? Do your courts administer justice impartially between man and man, between rich and poor? Is it as easy for a poor man as for a rich one to get his rights in your courts?

"You have great and powerful millionaires. How

did they get their money? Have they more influence than the poor in your churches and in your Congress, your legislatures and courts? Do they, in dealing with their employees, observe the moral law that the labourer is worthy of his hire? Do they treat their hired labourers as brothers? Do they put children to work who ought to be at play or at school?

“Do your churches protest when the militia is called out during a strike, or do they forget at such times what Jesus said about the use of the sword?

“After four centuries of teaching and preaching of your religion in your country, has crime disappeared or diminished, have you less use for gaols and fewer and fewer of your people driven into madhouses, and have suicides decreased. Is there a larger proportion of crime among Jews and infidels than among those who profess the Christian religion?

“What answers would your missionary return to these questions? How would you answer them?

“I do not attack Christianity. The foregoing questions are not intended as criticism of the great moral code underlying Christianity, but as criticism of the men who preach but do not practise that code. You may accuse me of ‘unbelief,’ but that is no answer. If you have any criticism to make of me or any accusation to bring against me, answer the questions first. Give me straight answers, and I will give straight answers to any questions you may put to me. My contention is that the code of morals taught by Jesus is a code of justice, of right living and

right doing; that the simple code of morals taught to the fishermen of Galilee by the Carpenter of Nazareth is all-embracing and all-sufficient for our social life.

"I shall be glad to contribute to your theological school or to any other that gets down to the bedrock of that social and moral code, accepts it in its fulness, and trains its students to teach and preach it regardless of the raiment, the bank accounts, the social standing or political position of the persons in the pews.

"Very truly yours,

(Signed)

"JOSEPH FELS."

He received every day scores of letters offering suggestions, criticising, cursing, requesting information. The first he considered always with courteous attention. To the criticisms he replied for the most part in an amusingly optimistic vein. Those who cursed were amply repaid in their own coin; Mr. Fels never hesitated to tell any man in full and plain terms exactly what he thought of him. To those who asked for information he always replied in elaborate detail, and a separate packet of literature, with a copy of *Progress and Poverty*, would, as a rule, accompany his reply. His ideas and views were embodied in many short articles and letters to the Press. It was his habit never to let any occasion pass when the theory of the Single Tax could be driven home. A Housing Bill was pro-

posed; he would urge that the present assessment on improvements simply penalised the tenant. A park was presented to some neighbourhood; he would point out the benefit it conferred on the landlords of the locality. One grows almost bewildered at the multifarious and incessant activities he undertook. He arranged, at one time, that every elector in Great Britain should receive a bundle of Single Tax literature. He attended practically every Trade Union Congress from 1909 to distribute leaflets to the members. He gave evidence before the Land Committee of the Labour Party. He went to Radical Congresses of every kind in the hope that they might be turned to good use. If a friend started a journal of any description, he clamoured to be allowed to explain his cause therein. It mattered nothing that the purpose of the paper was different from, even, on occasion, antipathetic to the Single Tax. If the purpose was different, then his article would introduce a little variety; and if it was antipathetic, the editor could point out his errors in a leader.

Two characteristic incidents showing how he endeavoured to turn every opportunity to account may be given. In 1910 Mr. Fels persuaded Tom L. Johnson, the famous Mayor of Cleveland, and a close friend, to pay a visit to him in England.

While there, Johnson noticed that a Free Trade Congress of all nations was to be held in Antwerp, and Joseph at once decided to make use of the occasion for propaganda purposes. To secure credentials from the American Free Trade League was the matter only of a cable. And a band of thirty stalwarts was soon on its way, eager to declare their enthusiasm for a Free Trade that went far beyond the ideals of most of its professed adherents at Antwerp. At first the Congress was adamant to his insistence that the Single Tax was merely the logical development of Free Trade ideas; it could not hear him. Then procedural objections were urged. No place had been set for him in the programme—were he to speak, all arrangements would be upset. The myriad official difficulties were coldly set before him. But Joseph was not thus easily daunted. A tribute was to be paid to Richard Cobden—Cobden, who, two generations ago, seeing the land-hunger of England, declared his belief in Free Trade in land, called for land valuation, and for a land tax that would bring to the revenue of that day £20,000,000. Joseph saw his opportunity. No more enthusiastic appreciation of Cobden was paid than his, but it combined also, and skilfully, a eulogy of Henry George as the man who had logically carried out

Cobden's conclusions. And no member left the Congress without ample literature upon the subject. "It was the best piece of work I have yet done," he wrote to a friend, "we came near to stampeding the Convention. I feel pretty sure that Henry George was never so near coming into his own as now—in any country. It is the struggle of the century, and the most inspiring struggle, too."

His other exploit was suggested by the Antwerp adventure. An International Conference on Unemployment was held in Paris in September, 1910, and he, with a large box of literature, freely distributed later, was in attendance. The Conference was divided into three sections—on the statistics of unemployment, on labour exchange, and on unemployment insurance. He spoke at length in all three. In the first, he urged that the time had passed when they need bother about the actual extent of unemployment. The age tended to choke itself in a series of "spluttering investigations" which resulted in nothing save satisfaction to the investigators. They knew that there was serious unemployment; that was sufficient to make them anxious to get ahead. He objected to Labour Exchanges and to Unemployment Insurance because they were beginning the problem at the wrong end; they assumed the inevitability of un-

employment and then attempted its minimisation. He was not content with that. He assumed that it could be prevented by the adoption of the Single Tax. Then the Conference heard some bitter home-truths about satisfaction with palliatives. He ended by appealing for converts to his crusade. He wrote of this Conference to a friend:—"Of course you will know what I had to say on these things. I take it we cannot do better, wherever possible, than by attending all such conferences and showing those assembled the utter futility of palliative measures, and the absolute necessity of attacking unemployment at its base. I do not think I ever before felt more bitter against a set of well-dressed, well-fed people who did not know what they were talking about, and I imparted as much bitterness to what I said as I knew how."

He accomplished something more on this journey than mere skirmishing. To another he wrote: "The most interesting incident of my Paris trip was that I had to inaugurate the first Single Tax League in France. . . . The fact that the Physiocrats before the Great Revolution enunciated what practically became the Henry George philosophy made it peculiarly interesting." Then followed a characteristic thought: "Whenever you have an odd ten minutes to spare, write Georges

Darien, the secretary of the new League, an encouraging letter; perhaps Eggleston or some other of the chaps will do it too." It was this initiation of comradeship in the movement which was not the least valuable of Joseph's gifts to it.

It was to this friend, Mr. U'Ren, of Oregon, that he wrote a letter that deserves reproduction in full, because nothing shows more clearly the trend of his political thought at this time. It makes clear, too, how intensely he felt upon this subject.

"You were very good," he said, "to write me so fully and freely on your opinion of my contentions as to the open agitation of our question in all its baldness. No one I can recall could have done it better, or been more patient about it. Thank you from the very bottom of my heart. You're one who, seeing the justice of things in its right relations, gives his friend of his plenty, and opens his own reservoir of knowledge freely for his friend's guidance. I value what you write to me, and it will serve me well in the work to which I have consecrated my life—I say consecrated, for so I consider devotion to the high and noble cause in which we find ourselves engaged. Surely no nobler or greater has yet crossed the horizon of the thinker, or the saint or sinner. Happily, too, one lives in an atmosphere which is not poisoned by fear of the stake or guillotine these days, though intolerance and ignorance and slavishness to opinion still find lodgment in the breasts of millions of people. One often thinks these are equally

bad, considering the high state of civilisation to which we are supposed to have attained.

“ Your letter gives one to think. I’ll keep it by me for a time—then I’ll make duplicates and submit them to a number of our colleagues. Perhaps, by and by, others will come up to the point of seeing the vision you outline; it is an alluring dream for the present. But who shall say that dreams which hold the germ of substantiality, as this one *does*, are impossible of materialisation, even in the short span of our own lives? In considering this thing, I have taken on a new lease of life, and hope, and assurance. And so, though I have set myself to seeing human freedom as an established fact, in one or more lands, during the next twenty years, I am much inclined to wipe out the time limit, and to declare boldly, ‘ I’ll see human freedom.’

“ The mere hint of the prospect has given me greater happiness during the last three years than I can recall of the previous fifty-three. There, you have my age.

“ The suggestion you outline for Pennsylvania is most alluring—Pennsylvania, my own State. It is a thing well worth the doing—no, the trying to do, even though one may not see it done. Perhaps (who knows?) I may find other men who will also see the vision to help with their purses. There are more and more devoted souls, who are glad to give themselves, coming to the front daily, hourly. There are few men given to view this great work going on in so many countries as I am. It all makes me very humble and very thankful. I’m sure you understand.

“I seem to have completely changed in the last three years in many directions. Perhaps this is caused by my earnest effort to see through the eyes of other men, of other nations, with other view-points than mine. I believe I am more patient with the opinions of others, and perhaps, too, the vision is enlarged.

“It is in my plan to go and see you at your workbench, in your own shop, and among your own people. A man is seen more clearly in his own environment, and I am hoping to leave for the West early in December. I must get up to a number of the Canadian towns, certainly Toronto, Winnipeg, and Vancouver. I am promising myself to raise hell, and part of the \$10,000 Kiefer is still praying for, to round off his work. It may amount to preying for it, but I don't mind that. It is simply robbing in a good cause.”

Chapter XIV

The Fels Fund Commission

UNTIL the beginning of 1909—that is, for the first four years of his connection with the Single Tax movement—Mr. Fels was content to work through the different organisations already in existence. He helped them time and again with funds, speeches, articles. Yet he was not altogether satisfied with their activity. The conviction grew upon him that the movement suffered seriously from decentralisation and disconnectedness. It seemed to bear no obvious relation to movements akin to itself. It had economic, but not political significance. This, of course, was true mainly of the United States; in Great Britain the efforts of the United Committee had brought the question into the arena of practical politics. But in America, particularly since the death of Henry George, while Single Taxers had not lost any of their enthusiasm, they had lost, Joseph felt, much of their direction. The movement tended to expend itself in the reading of papers, in colonisation experiments, in social functions at which Single Taxers might discuss a coming golden age, which, for the most part, they did little or nothing to forward. The movement, in fact, seemed to have

decreased both in vitality and in force. People in the United States did not discuss its principles as they had done in George's lifetime. Single Taxers were as prominent in opposition to Socialism as they were in the advocacy of their own doctrine. Early in 1908 Joseph began seriously to cast about for means to put a stop to what he called "the possibility of economic and intellectual dry-rot." Mr. Bolton Hall, of New York, provided him with the opportunity he desired.

Early in January, 1909, Mr. Hall wrote to Joseph asking for his assistance in a colonisation movement in which he was interested. To that letter he replied from London as follows:

"Your letter regarding the use of the 'little lands' has just reached me, and I believe it is a move in the right direction. For my part, I am a sincere believer in the taxation of land values, and while this 'little land' proposition of yours is not the most direct means to 'get back to land,' it works in that direction. Anything that creates land hunger must of necessity put before the public the unreasonableness of our present system of taxation, and the certainty that it must be reformed.

"And because of my belief that the time is ripe to spread information on land reform in general, you may draw on me for an advance of \$5,000 in that behalf, and I will agree to donate \$25,000 each successive year for the next five years towards a propaganda, provided others

can be found to give an equal amount each year. In other words, I will spend \$125,000 altogether, to be under the charge of a committee of land reformers, provided others will contribute likewise.

“You can make the movement so broad that men like Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan, Mr. Andrew Carnegie, Mr. James J. Hill, and other equally conservative men can stand with us on the same platform.”

This letter was the origin of the Joseph Fels Fund Commission of America. Mr. Hall showed the offer to a group of friends, and they founded the organisation which now bears Mr. Fels' name. An advisory committee was formed, to which George Foster Peabody, Louis F. Post—then editor of *The Public* and now Assistant Secretary of Labour in Mr. Wilson's administration—Bolton Hall, Henry George, Jun., then a member of Congress, and Bishop Williams gave their adherence. In addition to this committee was the actual working committee entrusted with the control and disposal of the Fund. To this belonged Jackson H. Ralston, Lincoln Steffens—most militant of American Radicals—Frederic C. Howe—now Commissioner of Immigration in New York, and then in the famous “cabinet” of Tom L. Johnson—and George A. Briggs. Daniel Kiefer, whom Joseph once said was probably the

"most efficient mendicant in the United States," was appointed its chairman.

Two things must be emphasised. The Commission attached, despite his protest, Mr. Fels' name to its work, because they believed that his position in the business world of America would give them a standing of practical importance. But Joseph neither in its origin nor at any other time used any personal influence in the control or direction of the Fund. He declined even to join the advisory committee. He preferred then, as always, to remain a free-lance in the movement, entirely unconnected with any organisation. He stood to the Fund in no relation other than that of an important contributor who sympathised with its objects and always deeply admired the work it was able to achieve. He was, of course, often enough consulted on the plans of the Commission, though as often as not he would abstain from offering counsel, lest by so doing he should fetter its members. He simply stood to it from the outset in the relation of an interested spectator who cared profoundly for its success. Nor was he disappointed in his hopes of what it would achieve.

The plans the Commission set before itself in the first year of its activity were commendably extensive. It assisted largely the progressive

movement in Oregon which, under the leadership of Mr. W. S. U'Ren, seemed likely to do work of permanent democratic value. Mr. U'Ren was promoting a Single Tax measure in that State and the Commission felt that they could do no finer work than assist it. Similarly, they helped in Rhode Island where, under Mr. Garvin, the Single Tax forces were highly organised, and in Missouri where the atmosphere was akin to, though less developed than, that of Oregon. A Press Bureau on an extensive scale was established which not only distributed material to a large number of radical journals, but also constituted a bureau of information in regard to the land problem all over the world. A dépôt of literature was created which distributed books and pamphlets, mainly free of cost, all over the United States. Publications, either definitely or largely Single Tax, were assisted in various ways. A beginning was made of what is now a remarkably complete directory of Single Taxers all over the world—a list which has proved of invaluable service as a means of propaganda, and must be of unique utility in any political movement. Experts were sent out to work up special districts. Arrangements were made to supply clubs and organisations of every kind with speakers

thoroughly acquainted with the economic philosophy of Henry George.

From the very first the Commission served, as it now serves in an increasing degree, as the clearing-house of the whole movement. It gave the Single Tax a national (U.S.A.) status by providing it with a national organisation. It focused the activities of the Single Taxers, and then reflected them outwards, where they could prove of the greatest service. In its mere collection of funds to correspond with the amount of the money subscribed by Mr. Fels, it probably penetrated into quarters where the Single Tax had never before been known. For the first time it endeavoured to distribute literature not only on an enormously wide scale, but in a thoroughly complete and scientific manner. The fundamental aim was to spread Mr. George's books. To this end, the Commission arranged for the publication of cheap editions of his works. At Joseph's suggestion translations of *Progress and Poverty* into Italian, Bulgarian, Swedish, Yiddish and Chinese were arranged.

The machinery of Congress was skilfully utilised in conjunction with Mr. Henry George, jun., to effect an enormous distribution of *Protection or Free Trade* by Henry George, sen., exactly at that

psychological moment when the revision of the tariff was being everywhere discussed. Nor was this all. It was realised that if the movement was to make an adequate appeal, regard must be had to the variety of men's interests. Some men were farmers, some manufacturers, some engaged in the process of distribution, a large number were wage-earners. Each naturally desired to understand the relation of the movement to his own special problems. For each, therefore, in addition to the large mass of purely general literature, a special series of reports began to be issued. The relation of Single Tax to farming, to manufacturing industries, to the wage problem, to trade unionism, was specially studied, and short, pithy pamphlets were published relating thereto. At the end of its first year's work, the Commission could fairly claim that at no time since Henry George himself had taken charge of the propaganda had the movement been so widely discussed or so generally appreciated.

The Commission, as was natural, did not fail to meet with criticisms, and it is but right to explain Mr. Fels' relation to them. It was complained to him that the Single Tax movement was essentially a democratic movement, that he had had no right thus to foster the establishment of an autocratic and self-appointed body. His reply to this was suffi-

ciently simple. The need for the kind of body which his gift had brought into being was daily becoming more apparent. Every organisation began by a number of men agreeing to foster certain aims and the Joseph Fels Commission had commenced in the same way. As to its autocratic character, Joseph was never very seriously concerned. It was, as he again and again pointed out to his complainants, always open to receive suggestions; and the main thing was efficiency. When its actual work was complained of, it would be time to discuss its methods and character. To a similar complaint that "his" Fund had no right to divert to itself all the funds of the movement, he replied that there could be no greater test of the popular appreciation of its merit. "People," he told one such critic, "give either because they like what the Fund is doing, or because they sympathise with the way it is doing it. No one gives to anything just because he wants to get rid of his money." Nor did he pay much heed to those who complained of the broad basis upon which the Commission had been established. Some complained of subsidies to papers not entirely Single Tax in their character. Others thought that the Commission had no right to divert its funds to movements like the Initiative and Referendum. He had no sympathy with either

of these attitudes. He did not, perhaps, consider that papers that were solely Single Tax in outlook were always the best media for propaganda, because he knew by experience that they appeal more or less to the converted. For the purpose of reaching readers outside the movement, he preferred to support an ably conducted radical journal which had an outlook sufficiently Single Tax to make its readers understand the potentialities of the movement. This, indeed, was the reason why the Commission particularly chose *The Public* as its American organ. Courageously sustained, and very ably edited for many years by Mr. and Mrs. Post, the paper had, as Joseph put it, "the real root of the matter." His view was that if the uninitiated read a radical comment from the Georgian standpoint on the problems in which they were interested in a journal with whose general policy they agreed, their sympathy was more likely to be won than if the same arguments were presented in a journal for the avowed policy of which they had, at the outset, no affection. To those who often applied to him to support or to start new journalistic efforts for the sole object of advocating the Single Tax doctrine, he would reply in his practical way, "It isn't good business, there won't be readers, and there won't be advertise-

ments." Time has shown that he was not mistaken in that judgment.

He believed, too, intensely in the promotion of the Initiative and Referendum. Together they constituted a formidable weapon against the holders of monopoly. Often enough it was the constitutional expedient necessary to secure the passage of a Single Tax measure. In that event, it was as he thought, the necessary instrument of the ideal, and he supported it with all the enthusiasm at his command. Indeed, to him the Initiative and Referendum were measures fundamental to any democracy. Their absence was due mainly, as he conceived, either to fear or to distrust of the common people, and both of those sentiments appeared to him entirely without basis in fact. It seemed to him the merest stupidity not to trust the people. Confidence enough, and to spare, had been placed in the benevolence of an aristocracy and the sense of a legislature's responsibility, and in both events they had proved to be misplaced. He urged continually that no finer check than the Initiative and Referendum existed to check the possibility of legislative misdemeanour.

Of one curious type of criticism a word may be said, and it is his own word. When he began to devote large sums of money to the Single Tax, he

was criticised by the capitalist Press in an amusing variety of ways. Sometimes it appeared that he was supporting an exploded fallacy. Sometimes he was told, as in a famous New York paper, that he had, like Mr. Carnegie, grown tired of his wealth and had chosen what he deemed the most fit method for its restoration. Point was supposed to be given to this type of comment by his own remark that he, in common with every wealthy man, was virtually a robber, since he had battened on the monopoly the law had enabled him to maintain. A newspaper paragraph on, "The wicked wealth of Mr. Fels," gave him the occasion for a pointed reply.

"I believe," he wrote, "as I said in my speech, that the fortunes acquired by many people are largely due to unjust economic conditions, and from the moral point of view, these conditions are responsible for what is practically a system of robbery. You say that it is 'impossible to work up complete sympathy with the moral distress of Mr. Fels. He can divest himself of his stolen goods if he so much wishes, and thus re-establish his soul-cleanliness.' But surely this would solve no problem, nor remove the cause of distress from any sympathetic mind. No efforts of mine can repair the mischief which is wrought by the unjust distribution of wealth. I cannot discover the men, women, and children who have been wronged by being deprived of what they have produced

with hard and exacting labour. Even if I could discover them, and if I were to restore to them the wealth, or a small part of the wealth of which they have been unjustly deprived, they would offer gratitude to which I have no just claim, because the wealth was not really mine. This relationship would be bad for them and bad for me. There is only one method, therefore, of curing the evils that spring from the unjust distribution of wealth, and that is by putting a stop to the injustice.

“ In your editorial you associate me with Mr. Carnegie, who has gained a world-wide reputation as a philanthropist, and suggest that his motives and mine, in discussing this subject, are the same. There is a mistake here. There is a clear distinction between our motives as well as our methods. Mr. Carnegie has generously endowed universities and libraries for the better education of working-people. I appreciate such work, but I would point out that this is not what the working-people are most in need of at the present moment. There are hundreds of thousands of well-educated men in Europe and America who cannot get reasonable scope for the application of their labour. The land of this world in some shape or other is the subject on which every man must exercise his labour. Much of the land is held up by private individuals against the men who are willing to use it; and for more of it men have to pay too high prices or rent. The result is that we have vast armies of unemployed men in every civilised country. I venture to affirm that, whether as a matter of business or of justice,

what these men require is not more education, but more freedom of access to land. The education they have received is rendered useless, and they are denied opportunity of developing and educating themselves further.

“ I object to land being held out of use as it is, under the laws of most countries. This policy prevents men from helping themselves, and forces them into the miserable and humiliating position of accepting and soliciting charity. I object, further, to land being used by one man as a means of exacting from another part of his earnings. A tax on land values, according to the principles of Henry George, would bring the land into use and enable the tax authorities to exempt buildings and improvements from the burdens that now fall upon them. This system would abolish poverty, by stopping that form of legal robbery for which the laws of the country are responsible. I am willing to spend money to introduce this system; I invite others to join me. It is a more reasonable task to do what one can to prevent the waste and ruin of human life and happiness, than to stand by while men are broken, even if we attend with bandages and ointment to bind up their wounds. This movement has taken root and is growing rapidly in the United States, in Great Britain, in Canada, in the leading European countries, and in Australasia. In a few years we shall realise a large measure of our aims.”

There is no more succinct statement of the Single Tax. The Commission was simply his commentary on its aims.

Chapter XV

Educational Experiments and Suffrage

IN all his activities towards betterment, Mr. Fels proceeded upon the principle that a necessary condition to mental and moral improvement is the re-arrangement of the physical conditions of life. As the old Physiocrats maintained that culture is historically derived in its various forms from types of physical environment, and that civilisation is a consequence of geographical conditions, so there are those who believe that the making of the individual man or woman is conditioned, not so much by the artificial environment of class-room and text-books, as by the environment of physical things and conditions found in early childhood. It is through dealing with conditions of real importance and interacting with a world whose significance is vital that any learning worth while must be derived.

At various times Joseph endeavoured to secure a larger measure of instruction and practice in gardening for the children, believing as he did in the unlimited possibilities of the soil in making men and women. As in most other cases during that period, he was before his time. The authorities were quite willing to be given financial assistance,

to be applied as they thought best. They would give no grant and almost no facilities for gardening, believing that nature study was quite sufficient. Nature study at that time, as indeed at present, consisted in the Council Schools of little more than producing before children a few flowers, twigs, leaves and tadpoles, with possibly a dove, rabbit or guinea-pig kept in confinement in the class-room. While the silent pressure of industrialism makes itself felt even in the infants' class, and especially in the growing provision for manual and technical training, those occupations which deal more directly with nature, which are vital in the conservation of national life and of overwhelming importance as the basis for individual development, have found, and still find, in British schools only sporadic and feeble support. Short-sighted education authorities are eager to serve their masters by producing in increasing quantity a proletariat of mechanical skill without knowledge of, or interest in, the one occupation which could save it from the wretched conditions that prevail in the modern industrial labour market, and, at the same time, make life more worth the living.

Apart from what was done for the teaching of gardening in connection with the Vacant Lands Cultivation Society, Mr. Fels' endeavours toward

altering the machinery of education resulted in disappointment. At Mayland,* however, where he was free to organise a school without official interference, as there was of course no grant from the education authority, he succeeded in producing an institution which might, had circumstances continued favourable, have become a model school of great influence. He called to his assistance the experience and judgment of Miss Maria Findlay, a veteran leader in the cause of educational reform, and, with the enthusiastic support of his teachers, arranged for the children of the colony a curriculum which had few equals and no superiors. It was concerned to a large extent with the every-day occupations seen about them, gardening, carpentry and the care of animals; and even the more formal materials of instruction were never permitted to pass out of touch with reality.

Having built and equipped such a school, having provided admirable teachers and an unsurpassed curriculum, he invited the Education Committee of the Essex County Council to take over and incorporate it in their system, and to give assurance that its excellencies would be maintained. There was no place for it in their system.

*A full account of this enterprise is to be found in "School Life." (George Phillips and Son, 1914.)

Of more importance so far as concerns ultimate results was his co-operation with Miss Margaret McMillan, in her efforts to improve the physical conditions of childhood. This original and energetic reformer, devoted to the cause of poor children, feeling always the futility of instructing minds housed in bodies underfed, unclean and often diseased, has given her life, with its rare wisdom and ability, to arousing the nation's interest in its children. She has worked with teachers, with public authorities, with politicians, on the platform, at conferences, everywhere that opportunity presented itself, with unsurpassed zeal, and in the end with astonishing success. Mr. Fels met her as she was leaving Bradford, after achieving for that city the proud distinction of incorporating into the local educational system provision for the hygienic needs of children. In conversation at the farewell gathering arranged in connection with her departure, he discovered that here was a personality with views and ideals of unlimited importance for the well-being of the future generation, very much in harmony with his own most intimate convictions, and worthy of every degree of support.

He offered at once to give financial support to Miss McMillan, who had drawn up a scheme of hygienic centres of larger scope than Bradford had

been able to allow her. Miss McMillan came to London and soon afterwards at our home in Bickley the offer was renewed, made definite, and attached to a scheme with which Miss McMillan intended to approach the Education Authority. This was in May, 1904. In November of the same year they went together to interview the Education Committee of the London County Council, and made an offer of £5,000 to assist in carrying out a plan of health centres. The Committee was, and especially its officers, of course, conservative, and treated the innovation with the usual degree of suspicion. As very often happened when Joseph was present, the interview became somewhat stormy—he usually succeeded in expressing his opinion of men and things. The central idea in the plan was the establishment and equipment of centres in the various districts of London for the hygienic inspection and treatment of school children. These centres would, of course, necessitate the installation of baths. The Committee was sufficiently magnanimous to be willing to accept the money without the plan. Asked what they could do with £5,000, they agreed that they might be able to establish two centres. Miss McMillan knew that with this money she could establish a much larger number. After this interview, Mr. Fels told her

that he could see little prospect of success in dealing with the authorities, and that it would be better for her to do her work alone, with his support.*

During all this time Miss McMillan was working for medical inspection in the schools, feeling that the whole movement toward the physical betterment of children would have to be of a piece. She prepared a *précis*, and secured the supporting signatures of the most enlightened medical men of London, such as Sir Victor Horsley, Sir Lauder Brunton, Mr. Forbes Winslow and Sir J. Crichton Browne. She secured also the support of the then president of the National Union of Teachers. Armed with this document she went to the House of Commons and interviewed her friend, Mr. Jowett, M.P. for West Bradford. Her plan contained three provisions—compulsory inspection, an annual report, and a supervisory board at Whitehall. Neither from Mr. Jowett, nor afterwards from Mr. Birrell, M.P., President of the Board of Education, was much encouragement received. Not daunted, however, she again interviewed Mr. Jowett together with Mr. Illingworth—Mr. Birrell's secretary—gave them further details, and

*Now that Miss McMillan has been elected a member of the L.C.C. (1919) we may look for developments.

also an estimate of the cost. Thereupon, Mr. Birrell received a deputation, introduced by Mr. Keir Hardie, M.P., and supported by several eminent medical men. Satisfactory results soon followed. Medical inspection was embodied in the Education Bill of 1906, and on July 16th, the clauses referring to it were carried in the House of Commons. The Bill was dropped in December, but the clauses providing for medical inspection were inserted in its successor and carried in the Education Act of 1907.

Miss McMillan carried on a ceaseless propaganda in favour of Treatment centres during these five years. In 1908 Bradford Clinic was opened. Later in the same year Miss McMillan obtained permission from the London County Council to use a single small room in Bow, and, supported by Mr. Fels, established the first school clinic. Two physicians, Dr. Eder and Dr. Tribe, each attended one afternoon per week. The education authority, however, being still distrustful and unsympathetic, sent few patients: the result of which gave them the opportunity to assert that the treatment was too costly. It amounted to 7s. 6d. per child. In the meantime the London County Council entered into an arrangement with certain hospitals to treat the school children sent to them, at the rate of 5s.

per child. And on this ground it was decided not to continue with Miss McMillan's scheme. Confident that her efforts were on right lines, Miss McMillan decided to drop all connection with the school authorities and proceeded with her own plans. As will be seen later, she demonstrated that her plans were sound. She went to Deptford and organised a private clinic, attended by two physicians, a dentist and a nurse. Not having to depend upon the County Council to send patients, the clinic was at once filled. From then, to the present, children have continued to pour in, and the treatment per child has been found to amount to 2s. 6d., half the hospital rate. This aroused the much-belated interest of the London Education Committee, and in 1911 it agreed to assist with a grant for dental treatment. This was followed in 1912 by an additional grant for eye and ear treatment. Miss McMillan has published seven reports, showing methods, results and cost. Through these, the Deptford experiment has become known throughout the world, and the school clinic will soon be everywhere an established part of the educational machinery. Holding firmly to her original idea of hygienic as well as medical treatment, Miss McMillan has widened the scope of her clinic to include remedial drill, and open-air camps for boys

and girls. In 1911 she opened a baby clinic, and in 1913 a baby camp.

The camp school may yet play a great part in solving the question of natural education for all. Certainly a generation of camp educated children would have the land hunger, and also some knowledge of how to use land in town and country. There are seventy children under seven years old living the open-air life on the ground Mr. Fels secured for use before leaving England for the last time. This, the first open-air nursery is also, perhaps, the largest in the country.

In this way Joseph placed his resources at the service of originality and devotion. While increasingly absorbed in other reforms, his interest in the Deptford experiment continued to the end. Just before leaving England on his last journey, while on a visit to the clinic, he happened to see some vacant land close by. He wrote to the County Council and secured the use of it to Miss McMillan.

* * * * *

It is needless to describe the ways in which Joseph gave encouragement and assistance to the cause of woman's suffrage. It is of more importance to make clear his mode of thinking and the motives which originated his action. With him

the movement was a factor which made toward freedom, and just as he endeavoured to show men workers how to use political machinery for the attainment of economic freedom, so he saw the suffrage as a necessary instrument by which women workers could secure for themselves a tolerable place in the world.

The pretence that women's sphere does not intersect that of productive labour is historically and actually absurd. Instead of woman endeavouring to enter into the occupations of man, it is more correct to say that man, under the modern circumstances of great populations, of industrially organised communities and the general absence of wars, has gradually occupied the sphere which historically belongs to woman. A very few months of war demonstrated how unessential man is in the main life-maintaining functions of society. It is now discovered that women can even make munitions of war. Man is, as always, the fighting, dominating drone. It is a pity there is no trade union of housewives, to make articulate their position, work and requirements. It would at once be discovered, that instead of being outside the economic sphere, woman is the larger half; if there were no other reason, because she is almost the sole disbursive agent of all income. Apart from household activity,

which is taken for granted, and unconsidered, women constitute an increasingly larger proportion of productive labour in industry; this labour is allotted to her as a class, and always distinguished by being underpaid. Wherever found, from the sweated shirtmaker, through the textile trades, through laundresses, domestic servants, waitresses, to clerks, inspectresses, and professional women, the rule is the same; the work of quality and quantity equal to that performed by men receives, when carried on by women, a lower scale of pay. Here then is a basis for a demand for the suffrage. The business of government is to redress grievances. Women are forced into a class distinction by the conditions of industry and by the inherent tendency of men to exploit them. The one effective mode of righting the balance is for women to have an equal voice in the conduct of affairs.

The objection frequently made to the extension of the suffrage to women is that it would align sex against sex, and therefore engender antagonism. The suffrage would assist to diminish, if not to destroy, this antagonism, as an analysis of its cause must show.

There is, then, a real and profound sex antagonism, which the suffrage movement is endeavouring to surmount. The cry that emancipation is prejudi-

cial to the home merely calls in question man's right to say anything about the home. To the vast majority it is merely a place for his rest, feeding and comfort. Its essential meaning seldom penetrates to the masculine consciousness, and this obtuseness is as marked in cabinet ministers as in navvies.

The greatest of all difficulties that the movement faces is the tendency to read the fatuous ineptitude of upper-class women into all ranks of society. Men in authority, because their experience has never taught them otherwise, firmly believe that woman is constitutionally incapable of grasping and handling the exigencies of legislation. It is a pity that they cannot one and all board for a week in a typical working-class household. They would find innumerable cases where the man would hesitate to declare, except very privately, that he is the head, in spite of the occasional use of his strong right arm. As a matter of fact, it requires a better grasp and a nicer balance of judgment to carry on a household, and bring up a considerable family of children on a pound a week, than have been displayed for many years at the Local Government Board or the Home Office.

Here then was Joseph's case for the suffrage. His creed contained but one article, "Freedom and equal opportunity for all." If a citizen's work

constitutes citizenship he could see no reason why sex should debar from a voice in the conditions of that work. But he had another reason as well; it was his confidence in the penetrative insight and grasp of the essential, which characterises every activity that woman undertakes. The natural conservators and disbursers of all wealth would not be long in applying their intuitive and acquired knowledge to the resources of the community. It is difficult to conceive a State, in the conduct of which women play their appropriate part, allowing the sources of all production to remain monopolised and exploited for the private benefit of a comparatively few individuals, while the mass of the people are held in servile, patronised, inspected and regulated bondage. His faith was strong that woman would soon penetrate the screen of pretence to the injustice which lies behind, and no happening of recent years would have given Joseph greater satisfaction than the political enfranchisement of women, a reform which had his hearty support.

Chapter XVI

Later Activities

CLOSELY connected with his zeal for education, was the deep interest he took in boys' and girls' clubs. Here, too, he felt was creative work, the turning of leisure to an educational purpose. Of the various ways in which he gave expression to his interest there is no space to speak; but one story I am able, through the Hon. Lily Montagu, to reproduce.

“ Mr. Joseph Fels first influenced the life of the West Central Girls' Club when he appeared in the character of a fairy godfather at our Anniversary Celebration in 1910. On this occasion he was present when Miss Montagu made an appeal for building an adequate home for the many girls and women who come to London to learn English, or are orphaned and seek a home rather than the ordinary lodging house. Slips were handed to all the large audience who filled the New Theatre, but only one slip was filled in with any substantial promise. Miss Montagu and all her friends read this slip over and over again before they understood that £1,000 had been offered, and then a little later Mr. Fels himself was able to make the meaning of the promise clear. He was not interested in mere working machines, he wanted human beings. He was very glad for Jewish working girls to have a home, but insisted that some sort of garden should be provided.

It was therefore through Mr. Fels that the roof-garden was made at the Emily Harris Home, and on summer afternoons and hot evenings girls of all nationalities are reaping the advantage of his great thoughtfulness.

"After Mr. Fels had once become interested in the Club and Home, he remained in touch with the workers and members. On several occasions he invited parties of girls to visit his country house and gave them delightful afternoons. His visitors always felt at home at Bickley and they always considered that their host was the youngest of the party.

"It was Mr. Fels' pleasure to invite men and women of knowledge and culture who would interest the girls and enlarge their outlook on life, and he himself did not lose any opportunity of giving them some understanding of the great land problem. So long as the West Central Club and the Emily Harris Home exist, the name of Joseph Fels will be remembered not as that of a mere benefactor, but as that of a real and understanding friend."

In other and more important ways did he manifest an interest in the affairs of his race. The treatment of the Jews in Russia was a matter of intense and recurring concern, and he took a large part in efforts to alleviate their condition. This work brought him into association with Mr. Zangwill, in whom he found that combination of dreamer and worker which always made to him an irresistible

appeal. Joseph was from the outset interested in the Jewish Territorial movement, but rather as an outlet for his own economic plans than as an end in itself. This close connection with movements towards Jewish colonisation makes his attitude and conclusions of sufficient value to record.

Probably the most distinctive Jewish product of this generation is the Zionist movement. It is rooted in the profoundest of racial sentiments, and its motive has existed ever since the great dispersion. That Jews will some day gather from the ends of the earth to their ancient home, with institutions and customs safely guarded through all ages, with blood kept pure and racial unity intact, that political and religious freedom will be again achieved, is a dream that lies near the heart of every true son of Israel. It has, in this day, flowered out into a definitely conceived plan and intent, with a great organisation, upon realising the promises made by the Great Powers, and particularly by the British Government.

If the chief object of Zionism is the attainment of political and religious liberty, the ability to practise customs and develop institutions distinctively Jewish, this after all could be best realised in a region sufficiently favoured by nature not to render prosperity impossible. Even so, the difficulty is

sufficiently great as the habitable world has been swallowed by the voracious nations of modern Europe. Because of this difficulty, the movement which represents this phase—the Jewish Territorial Organisation known as the ITO—explored a number of regions and investigated political possibilities in a practical way. Missions of scientific experts were sent out to report upon Cyrenaica and Angola. The result was discouraging. These regions did not appear to the ITO leaders much better than Palestine from the point of view of productivity.

Joseph's knowledge of artificially produced colonies was probably more extensive and profound than that of any other man of his generation. It had been gained through much disappointment to expectation and much sacrifice of money. He was aware that a mere aggregation of families does not constitute a community, as it does not imply the presence of cohesive forces which are, in the main, of natural origin and slow growth. If, however, these factors are implicit he conceived it possible to stimulate a rapid development, and thus give that adjustment of thought and activity that would unify a group into a community. There must be present, he always believed, some common participation in an ethical, spiritual, or intellectual interest.

The great difficulty in economically initiated colonies which he had helped to establish both in America and in England was to bring people together for extra-economic purposes. Even for the small group of families of a score or more at Mayland he established school, amusement and reading rooms, and provided as well as he could addresses and series of lectures on a great variety of topics.

This side of community life can never be forced. It can only be made easy of exercise in its incipient stages if some disposition is already present. If it continued permanently absent, he was aware that, however prosperous the members of the group might be, it was still merely an aggregation and not a community. It is certain that a colony of Jews would not fail through lack of spiritual cohesion. This is, indeed, the most powerful factor that would be involved, and has seemed to supporters of the Zionist movement an adequate basis for colonisation. Mr. Fels concluded that conditions entailing permanent poverty would ultimately result in failure, however close might be the communism of political and spiritual purpose. Such a colony would probably appeal only to members of the race dwelling in countries where they were extremely oppressed, and even to those the conditions would be ill-favoured. The Jew, after

all, is no more called upon to renounce worldly prosperity than other races, and Joseph was quite aware that he would refuse to do so. For Jewish colonisation then, the economic question is of paramount importance, and the one regarding which the makers of colonies seem most ignorant. It is within the memory of some that a band of enthusiastic Australian socialists conceived the idea of realising their Utopia in South America. With their own ship and an abundance of goods, they crossed the ocean and founded "New Australia" in the garden land of Paraguay. It was part of the irony of fate that the inspiration of economic idealism should plant their community in a region where there could be no market facilities for two generations. Twelve miles of road through a swamp have been their undoing. What they produced they could not place upon the market.

To the same country came a band of Germans, headed by Dr. Foerster, brother-in-law of Nietzsche, to found a "New Germany," and the colony seeking the same perfection of internal organisation was planted in a remote region with impossible communications. There can be no escape from the economic world with hope of permanent survival. Any colonist must feel in time that he has some right to material prosperity

and will inevitably go in search of it. His knowledge of all these and other experiments in colonisation made it clear to Mr. Fels that the chief concern should be to find for Jewish colonies places well-favoured by nature, with adequate means of communication.

But Joseph's insight carried him even further. Given a colony of the most perfect spiritual communism, and endowed with an adequate supply of natural resources available for production and exchange, there was still lacking an element of assurance that the colony would subserve its noble purpose. Mere freedom from external oppression is no guarantee against internal tyranny, and he could not see that servitude of Jew to Jew was much better than servitude of Jew to Gentile. That his race contains some proportion of voracious members he did not doubt; in fact he was acquainted with some of them. It was therefore his desire that the economy of the colonies should, from the start, provide adequate protection against monopolistic slavery. The utter simplicity and effectiveness of what he urged may be seen in the following pronouncement by Mrs. Lona Ingham Robinson:

“Suppose a few hundred people obtain access to a fertile, uninhabited island and set out to colonise it. They

recognise that all sites or selections cannot possess equal advantages, that some will be wooded, some not, some high, some low, near water or otherwise, some near centres of trade, some far out, some large, some small, and so on. They inspect and make a plan of the grounds, and each family or adult person makes a selection with the full understanding that while the whole island belongs to all, the various locations must necessarily vary in desirability or become more valuable with the increase of people. So the colonists equalise their holdings something like this:

“The least desirable or perhaps the smallest lot or site in use will be taken as a basis to compute all the others by. Recognising that the occupant of the least advantageous site has left all the better or bigger locations for the others, or has had it left to him by others, while the whole is as much his as theirs, it is agreed that he shall occupy his holding free. All the others, having better locations, agree now to pay annually into the collective funds sums equal to the advantage, expressed in money, their sites have over the poorest site in use. This collective fund would represent all the various advantages in excess of the poorest lot in use.

“Now that these various inequalities are taken off, paid into the public fund, the colonists all stand practically alike in their holdings. They have paid all the excess values into the treasury. When this fund is straightway used for public purposes, roads, schools, fire protection, town hall, library, etc., in which all share alike, they have worked out triumphantly the problem of

equal rights to the use of the island. As years go on and increase of population and trade increase the value of all their holdings, their public fund grows larger just in proportion as they need more improvements. So their land values being sufficient for their expenses, no other taxes are thought of. Whatever private means the colonists brought with them or earned by labour afterward are neither listed nor rated. Everyone has the worth of what he was assessed for the use of his location. This assessment is what he pays all the other co-owners for exclusive use of his apportionment."

Shortly after he made Mr. Zangwill's acquaintance Joseph became a member of the council of the "ITO," and thenceforward took an active interest in its plans. He was a frequent attendant at its council meetings, and, as Mr. Zangwill gives testimony, of much aid by reason of the shrewd practicability of his judgments. As plan after plan was considered, and had to be placed on one side, Mr. Fels began to undertake some investigations on his own account. When he visited Diaz in 1907, one of his proposals was for a Jewish settlement in Mexico. He had inquiries made about South America. A letter of inquiry he wrote about the latter possibility is not without its interest.

"I may not before have mentioned to you that, being a Jew, I am greatly interested in the future of my

people, and for several years I have been co-operating with such men as Israel Zangwill. . . . His organisation has been on the look-out for a country in which the oppressed Jews of Russia and other lands might be invited to settle, where a measure at least of autonomy might be had. Within the last month an expedition has been dispatched to investigate the Angola district on the West Coast of Africa. . . .

“ My interest in this matter is very great, of course, and grows as I see the constant cruelties which are inflicted upon my people, defenceless as they are under the Russian Government. Whether or not autonomy could be gained by settlement in one or other of the South American countries is a matter about which I should like to consult with you. I believe, for instance, that Paraguay has only 700,000 population. That is a country about as large as Great Britain, and I believe a settlement of people could well be carried on in that country. Of course, I have in mind the right kind of landlords, and my interest is not unmixed with my obsession about the Single Tax.”

It is interesting to note that he grew the more interested in the movement as its possibilities verged more and more towards the historic birth-place of the Jews in Palestine. It is certain that he had been gripped by the vision of a Jewish people with a cultural centre of its own, standing to the West as Greece stood to the East two thousand years ago. To him the Jews were essentially a race

of missionaries, born to preach, by book and by example, the gospel in which he himself believed.

When this vision came to him he realised that the emotional quality of the race could not be readily employed in any land that only answered the Great Jewish need by reason of its economic advantage. The Zionists had made it clear that they would not exchange the possible infertility of Zion for the fat lands of East Africa, and, if at the time this looked the height of political unwisdom, this conquest of sentiment over what appeared to be hard logic has in the end justified itself in the manifest willingness of all sorts of Jews to sacrifice for a cause whose magic is the spell cast by instinctive yearnings for an ancient motherland. The issue between "any land" and *that* land was to settle itself as one of the by no means minor problems of the Great War when Joseph passed away. But he had looked ahead and foresaw the cause of events. And it is now particularly interesting to note in one of his letters the expression of an anxiety that Justice Louis D. Brandeis should assume the leadership of the American movement. Certainly my own increasing association with it would have met with his hearty approval—would have been, indeed, the realisation of his own desire.

The Jews have always manifested a curious

compound of spiritual idealism with practical morality, and therefore it can safely be asserted that despite every pull contrariwise, given a free hand, they will attempt, and eventually achieve, social justice in the new Zion. Therefore to them the end sought must be that the State must in its constitution set out from a basis of economic justice, that is to say, its economic philosophy would be the philosophy of Henry George. There appeared to Joseph something almost of a poetic justice in the Jews thus giving to the world the example of freedom, as in an earlier day they had given birth to religion. He worked steadily to promote the end in view. Friends were written to, the audiences at his meetings almost invariably learned something of his thought, and Jewish Single Taxers would inevitably receive whatever he could procure of the literature of the subject. One of the last conversations he had was an expression of his high hopes in this regard.

For it is clear that his previous attitude toward Zionism, especially as concerns the economic inadequacy of Palestine, was due to insufficient data. In late years, actual colonisation on a considerable scale and in a fairly scientific manner has been successfully initiated. There are some fourteen thousand agricultural colonists well es-

tablished, and, until the war ended their export trade, as prosperous as could be expected. The soil gives a reasonable response, as soon as scientific tillage is substituted for the abuses which pass amongst the Arabs as agriculture. The exported products meet a great demand in the world's markets, and there is every reason to believe that, in the course of a generation or so, Palestine may be remade into a garden.

Another factor in the movement would have been decisive with him. He had offered support on a large scale to the ITO on the single condition that the system of land tenure be in accordance with the principles of Henry George, which are also the principles of Moses and an integral part of the Jewish code. The rebuff he met with was possibly due to the fact that some of the prominent supporters of the ITO were of the great Jewish landlord class in England, which made it difficult for the movement to be entirely democratic. Zionism, on the other hand, has affirmed its abhorrence of oligarchic control, and in the constitution of the National Fund, its agency for purchase and tenure of land, it has made clear its intention to base colonisation on the principle of permanent State ownership of land, and the utilisation of rentals as the source of revenue for the State. This frank

adoption of single tax as an integral part of its plan and intent would have commended Zionism to Mr. Fels as worthy of his most zealous support as soon as the way was found open to realisation.

In the subsidiary work of the ITO which consisted in creating Galveston a Jewish port of entry to the United States so as to divert from the slums of New York some of the vast volume of immigration from the Russian Pale and to spread it over the emptier and healthier regions west of the Mississippi, Mr. Fels was a devoted participant, even though the British Committee met under the roof of the late Lord Rothschild, whose indifference to the Single Tax was not calculated to win his regard. On one occasion he accompanied Mr. Zangwill to Bremen to receive and comfort a batch of cruelly-rejected emigrants, on which occasion, finding a large number of children in the Jewish Emigrants' Shelter, he bought sweets for them all and had them photographed in a great group.

The Jews were not the only persecuted race in whom he felt deep interest. For injustice of any kind he had the very deepest abhorrence and that feeling, indeed, lay at the bottom of most of his activities. He took, for example, a large part in the famous McQueen case. And he got Mr. H. G. Wells to visit the man in Trenton prison and deal

with the subject in his book "The Future of America."

McQueen was a native of Leeds, England, a painter and grainer by trade, who, at 26 years of age, emigrated to the United States in search of a wider opportunity than England offers to men of this type. Mr. H. G. Wells describes McQueen as "one of those young men England is now making by the thousand in her elementary schools, a man of that active, intelligent, mentally hungry, self-educating sort that is giving us our elementary teachers, our labour members, able journalists, authors, civil servants, and some of the most public spirited and efficient of our municipal administrators."

After his arrival in New York the Labour Unions soon found in McQueen an able speaker and an active colleague. In June, 1902, the silk weavers in Paterson, New Jersey, invited McQueen to visit them and to speak at a meeting organised in connection with some labour difficulties which were then assuming an acute form.

Of this city Mr. Wells says:—"No country could possibly be proud of Paterson . . . it is a place which receives and uses up immigrants. It is a place of ugliness and weariness and injustice . . . The workers seethe in polyglot discontent. . . . I

must confess I do not blame them. If I was to get in the Paterson mill I should certainly want to kill somebody."

On the occasion of McQueen's visit the silk-dyers were on strike, but the weavers were weaving "scab" silk, dyed by dyers elsewhere, and it was believed that the dyers' strike would fail unless they struck also. To prevent failure it was felt that they must be induced to come out. McQueen spoke at a public meeting called for this purpose, but as the records show, he was so mild in his utterance as to displease his audience, and he had to give way to a fiery advocate, who spoke in Italian, and who roused the gathering to a white heat. The result of that meeting was a riot. Although McQueen had said nothing to warrant arrest, the authorities determined to "make an example," and he, with others, was arrested. He was tried, convicted, and sentenced to five years' penal servitude.

These, in brief, are the facts. It was clear, as Mr. Wells wrote, "There had been a serious miscarriage of justice. . . . No one pretends that McQueen is in jail on his merits, he is in jail as an example and lesson to any who propose to come between master and immigrant worker in Paterson."

Joseph took the case up, and during McQueen's imprisonment he made it his care that Mrs. McQueen should not suffer. He obtained testimony in England from labour members of Parliament, trade union leaders, and business men as to Mr. McQueen's record. Wherever he was informed that McQueen had at any time been employed he visited the place to obtain evidence. He searched the English police records. He wrote to many men of influence in the matter, members of the Court of Pardons and the Governor of New Jersey. He offered to give Mr. McQueen employment on his release.

The Rev. A. W. Wishart, who was mainly instrumental in securing Mr. McQueen's pardon, tells how he became interested in the case, and wrote a pamphlet about it. He also gives a characteristic picture of Joseph's association with the matter. Mr. Wishart says:—

“About the time of the publication of my pamphlet I received a letter from Mr. Fels saying that he had read of the case in the London papers and wanted to know what he could do to help me. As I then had invested about \$150 or \$200 of my own money in the case, which I could ill afford, and as I saw other expenses ahead of me, I wrote to Mr. Fels that some financial help would be most timely, especially if I was to carry on the case any

further. He sent me . . . a cheque. Very soon afterwards he wired me he was coming to Trenton to see me, which he did. He stayed at my house all night, and we visited several judges of the Board of Pardons, who were also on the Court of Errors and Appeals Bench. Mr. Fels also went with me to Paterson. It was a bitterly cold day, and we tramped all day long, visiting business men, everywhere meeting with rebuffs and sometimes almost with insults, because it was believed by the Paterson men that McQueen was a dangerous criminal, and that we might be in better business than in trying to secure his release from the penitentiary. Mr. Fels sent my brief on the case to innumerable people, and wrote very many letters which tended to interest influential men in the case. Little by little friends sprang up on many sides. After two years of such battling we succeeded in convincing the Board of Pardons that McQueen should be released."

Another incident may be mentioned, as showing how passionately Joseph desired to see justice done to all men, regardless of their status or condition. He came in contact with a man of gipsy blood, a prisoner who had spent many years of his life in jail. Kindly treatment soon won his confidence, and little by little he told him his story. Joseph persuaded him to write it down. From the torn little bits of dirty paper, from an ill-written, ill-spelt and utterly disconnected narrative there was ultimately

pieced together a condemnation of the conditions in a certain State penitentiary such as no words can describe. Horrified at the disclosures, Joseph had a fair copy of the man's narrative made and sent it to the Governor of the State concerned. He received no reply. He wrote and urged that such a revelation suggested at least the need for an inquiry. To this response was made that the Governor could take no steps in the matter. Joseph was furious at this rebuff. It was, as he said, at least worth while to have the indictment investigated; it might happen to be true, and the Governor would have the satisfaction of knowing that he had remedied an injustice. To this request, also, he received a curt refusal. He could stand it no longer. He wrote to the Governor, demanding an immediate inquiry, at which a representative, nominated by himself, should be present; otherwise he threatened to publish the statement and the correspondence in every journal in the United States. Within a month the inquiry had been held to his satisfaction.

This unceasing hatred of injustice was shown in his ever-ready help to the Russian revolutionists. Time and again he was told of some escaped radical's distress; and his eager interest in the event and his anxiety to be of more than financial

service were at least as much appreciated as his actual monetary aid. One instance of his sympathy in this connection is too remarkable to go unnoticed.

In 1907, a Congress of all the members of the Social Democratic Party in the Russian Duma was arranged to meet at Vibourg in Finland. It was driven out by the authorities and endeavoured to assemble in Sweden. This was forbidden on complaint from the Russian Government, and a similar prohibition came from other Continental countries. They were, therefore, driven to London. When they arrived, their funds were exhausted, and so far from being able to carry on their conferences, the delegates, some two hundred in number, were in serious danger of starvation. Someone suggested an application to Mr. Fels, who at once loaned them eighteen hundred pounds. Only a small part of this money was repaid, not because of the poverty of the delegates, but because so many of them were sacrificed later by the Russian authorities.

Yet these activities were but deviations. The Single Tax was, after all, the main object he had in view, and to that he endeavoured to subordinate everything else. He watched the progress of the Fels Commission with the deepest anxiety. Once it was clear that the method was successful,

he began to make similar plans for most of the countries in which he interested himself. To Canada he gave a dollar for every dollar raised by the Single Taxers in that country; to Norway, Sweden and Denmark, a krone for every krone raised by the Scandinavians. Similarly with Australia, New Zealand and Germany. Where the movement, as in France, Spain, China, seemed not sufficiently advanced to make this method advisable, he gave a direct subvention to the local or national groups concerned. In England, for the most part, his contributions were made directly through the United Committee. He realised that the hereditary political associations of the great landowners had made the English struggle unique and that the movement would probably be successful only by the steady permeation of the Liberal and Labour members of Parliament. Towards the close of his life, he began to be convinced of the need for the erection of some central body to unite in a single organisation the varied activities in Europe. Had he lived, it is probable that he would have created a European Commission of this kind; this idea has, happily, been carried into effect. The Joseph Fels Commission (which found it necessary to dissolve in its old form and reorganise) is now an International Body, with a central office in New

York, which is in communication with the principal cities of other countries.

It must not be imagined that Mr. Fels regarded his function in the movement as solely that of a creator of its endowments. He was, on the contrary, very active in the repression of any such view. The number of requests for his support must have been relatively enormous, but he constantly refused his assistance until he was given evidence of local activity. It seemed to him that his duty was rather to stimulate the Single Taxers themselves to action than to allow them to consider that any funds they deemed necessary would be at once forthcoming. If he had made any general criticism of the movement, he would have urged that many of its adherents had not shown themselves sufficiently capable of disinterested self-sacrifice. A movement, he said again and again, never advances very far until it can point to its martyrs. It was for that reason that he limited his subscriptions to the same amount that any country, State, or district would itself raise. He was a stimulus to local exertion, a kind of economic gadfly who stung others into activity. The friend who said that his "speeches made you feel how little you had done" exactly expressed what those speeches set out to achieve.

That the Joseph Fels Commission was able to overcome the apathy it found in the Single Tax movement, there can be no doubt. Both he and his coadjutors continually made it evident that they had no sort of sympathy for passive expressions of adherence. "The greatest thing," he once said, "is to give yourself; next, to give your money." He himself fulfilled both those behests in spirit as well as in letter.

It was a sign of reawakening interest when on November 19th and 20th, 1910, the Commission was able to inaugurate the first Single Tax Conference in New York. It was an interesting occasion. Joseph himself was present and took an active part in the proceedings. The Commission reported on what it had done, and ably withstood the fires of its critics. To the latter he made a characteristic retort. There had been much agitation directed—as has been already noted—against the support given to the Direct Legislation movement. "I want to say," he remarked, "that since my return to this country, and since I have been learning the reasons why certain things have been done, I am in perfect agreement with the work of the Commission."

The Conference was an interesting experiment in democratic organisation. It was a purely infor-

mal gathering of some eighty people from fifteen States of the Union. There was no set programme beforehand. It was open to any one to introduce a resolution. Every type of Single Taxer, humble and representative, was present. All who had taken charge of any aspect of the movement, Mr. Lincoln Steffens, Mr. Bolton Hall, Mr. Daniel Kiefer, Mr. Louis F. Post, Mr. U'Ren, Mr. Fels himself, contributed an analysis of their experience. Mr. Fels also told something of the condition of things in Europe. He spoke of the Budget of 1909. "The land clauses in the British Budget were put there to stay. Nothing that any party can do will stop the movement in England. Had it not been for the land clauses in the Budget, the Liberal Party would have gone down to defeat, and if these clauses are cut out of any future programme the party will go down to defeat." He commented hopefully on the movement in Sweden and Denmark. One hundred and forty thousand small farmers in Denmark, with an average of less than twenty acres apiece, are teaching our doctrines everywhere. In many of the public schools of Denmark you will see pictures of Henry George on the wall." He told of Spain and France, of what, under his inspiration, Dr. Macklin was doing in China. "I had," says a friend who was present, "a

wonderful sense of his cosmopolitanism. His sympathy seemed so big that he took the world in his arms."

After this Conference he visited France and Germany, and established definite working connections in both countries. It is of some special interest that in Germany he should have won the aid and friendship of William Schrameier, who as governor of Kiau-Chau had been successful in raising the entire revenue of that colony by means of the Single Tax. In England Joseph was, at this period, mainly concerned in fighting the Insurance Act, to which he was very bitterly opposed. It seemed to him that the Act marked the initiation of a dangerously paternalistic spirit in legislation. It penalised the trade unions, by putting the benefits they could offer against those to be offered by the great insurance companies.

In the early winter he came over to the United States, and on November 23 he was in Chicago for the Second Single Tax Conference, of which he had been elected honorary president. Nearly two hundred people were present at its general sessions from twenty States in the Union, besides representatives from Great Britain and Canada. Much had happened since the previous Conference. The Commission was able to report a preliminary vic-

tory in Oregon in the passage of the amendment granting home rule in taxation to counties. Progress along similar lines, though without definite result, was reported in Missouri, Rhode Island, and Ohio, in all of which the Joseph Fels Fund had taken an active part. The American Economic League had been organised under the Commission, which supplied material to more than 300, now 700, newspapers. *The Public* had been supported, and literature had again been distributed on an enormous scale. The Commission, on the whole, had good reason to be satisfied with the progress of its efforts.

The Conference discussed every aspect of the movement. It had again to meet the criticism of the irreconcilables, who felt that the funds should be devoted to Single Tax alone; but they were unable to make any impression. Joseph insisted that the propaganda should be such as the situation seemed to demand, and that to pin the movement down to any hard and fast lines of activity would be largely to render it ineffective. He told of his activities in Europe, and of a meeting he had held on the steamer during his last voyage to New York, which Mr. Croker, the well-known Tammany "Boss" had attended. "I embarrassed Mr. Croker," he said, "by asking him why he had been

one of the crowd that had killed Henry George. Croker answered, after some hesitation, 'If we hadn't killed him, he would have killed us.' "

The next two years were a time of incessant activity for Mr. Fels. He had become so identified with the movement that the demands made by it upon his time grew by leaps and bounds. He was being continually asked for opinion, criticism, suggestion. From every part of the world came invitation after invitation to take over the propaganda of the movement. In the summer of 1912, he paid a long visit to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and in the winter to Canada. Everywhere he was speaking once, twice, sometimes three times daily, in theatres, churches, synagogues, clubs. He was drafting briefs of evidence for the Single Tax to lay before municipal commissions on Taxation.

About this time Joseph was greatly cheered to learn that the Single Tax movement was making good progress in Spain, and when further invitations reached him to visit that country in order to encourage and help those of our friends who were at work there, he at once decided, in spite of the heavy strain which his tour of the United States had put upon his strength, to return to Europe.

On his arrival in England arrangements were made to attend a Spanish Land Values Conference in April, 1913, and early in that month we sailed from Southampton to Gibraltar, accompanied by Dr. Felix Vitale of Montevideo, Mr. and Mrs. Metcalfe of the Irish Land Values League, and other friends.

A vigorous campaign in the Spanish press paved the way for a successful conference. The Ministry of Public Instruction was asked to contribute to the cause of the Ronda International Conference "for its proper splendour and efficiency," and the principal theatre "Espinel" was generously loaned for the whole term of the Conference, enabling musical and other attractions to be arranged for during the period.

An incident on our journey from Gibraltar to Ronda is worth recording. On the arrival of the train at Arriate, the centre of a somewhat scattered farming area, we found an influential group of the residents awaiting us. They had for two days received every up train in order that they might demonstrate their appreciation of the visit and show their sympathy and trust in the teaching of Henry George, and accord a welcome to those who come to forward the truth he had proclaimed. After some touching speeches of personal regard we left

amid cheers and cries of "Viva Fels, Viva el Impuesto Unico!"

At Ronda a perfectly arranged reception awaited our party. A crowd of fully one thousand persons were present at the station, including representatives of the local trade unions with their handsome trade banners, and the town band of some thirty-six performers. When our train came to a halt, we were speculating as to what public event was being celebrated; but all doubt was cleared away when the band blazoned forth the Land Song. Then we knew that the demonstration had been arranged for our benefit. We were received by the Alcande, or mayor of the city, Señor Ramon del Prado y Camara, who bade us welcome, and escorted by the procession with the band and banners, we proceeded to the Rena Victoria Hotel, which was our home during our stay.

The next day we gathered in the Teatro de Espinel under the presidency of Dr. Vitale, and for the three days of the Conference this fine building was fairly well occupied with an enthusiastic audience. The platform was filled with Foreign and visiting Spanish delegates. The subjects of discussion were: (1) Means to unite the efforts of the Single Tax movement throughout the world; and (2) Means to unite the Spanish



RECEPTION AT THE SPANISH SINGLE JAX CONFERENCE, RONDA, SPAIN, APRIL, 1913.

movement with the Single Tax movement in South America.

It is hardly possible to record the delegates who attended. Madrid papers gave them as from Georgist Societies in 26 Spanish Provinces, or more than half. Three municipal delegates from Santander, on the Biscay Coast, must be mentioned; also the President of the Regional Council of Malaga, Mr. F. Marin; several leading lawyers, notably Mr. Blas Infante, of Seville, one of the selected orators. Among the educationists perhaps the most interesting figure was Mr. Ildefonso Yanez, of Ceuta, Spanish Morocco, who has written brilliantly on the Single Tax, and even dedicated to the Conference his latest drama "Villaurora."

Mr. Fels on rising to make his speech of greeting was received with a prolonged storm of cheers as "Patriarca venerado del Georgismo mundial."

After three delightful days of conference and friendly intercourse and pleasure, which was intensified by the cordiality with which we were received, we returned to England, feeling much encouraged with the prospects of the movement as regards its international aspect. As an evidence that the seed sown in 1913 has borne good fruit, I need only say that, by a Royal decree published in

March of this year (1919), the Municipalities of Spain are authorised to tax the increase of value of the land under their jurisdiction. The tax ranges from 5 to 25 per cent. according to the value of the property and is levied upon the amount by which the sale price of the land exceeds the cost price.

* * * *

A letter characteristic of Joseph deserves to be quoted in full. The then Governor of Alabama had written for his views on taxation, and had expressed his own opinion in these terms: "Under the laws as they now exist in Alabama, nearly all personal property escapes taxation. I am inclined to believe that the remedy is an income tax." To Mr. Fels, of course, this was the rankest heresy, and he replied as follows:—

"It was good to get your cordial and kindly letter of the 24th inst., and I am glad to hear directly from you of your familiarity with the economic philosophy of Henry George. I am glad to note it is your intention to appoint a voluntary commission for the purpose of revising your revenue system, it being your intention to consider carefully the question of personal property taxation.

"You tell me that under your present laws nearly all personal property escapes taxation. Why tax any personal property?

"Now, my dear Governor, those things we want to

get rid of, we tax. If the City Council of Montgomery should want to get rid of dogs, they would put a tax on dogs so heavy that the dogs would disappear without much ceremony. In building houses, we should get rid of windows if a tax were laid on windows, as is now the case in Belgium, I believe, and was, until sixty years ago in England. There are still to be seen in England hundreds of cottages with but one window—a relic of that foolish taxation.

“So I am rather grieved that you should incline towards an income tax as any help whatever. If we should tax personal property of any kind, we make it more difficult for people to accumulate personal property, and the bigger the tax we put on a house, whether a dwelling, a factory, or a bank building, the fewer of them will be put up, and the less money will be invested in them, simply because of this taxation.

“On the other hand, if we should untax industry and business, by placing no tax at all on produce of labour, including buildings, we shall give the greatest impetus to industry. A question then arises, of course, as to where we shall get an income for state, county, and city purposes. My answer to this is that we should find out the site-value of every piece of land in Alabama, based upon the market or fair price as between a willing buyer and a willing seller, and then place a tax upon this assessed land value. Of course, the thing might not be done all at once, but it could be done with the greatest benefit to all those who are willing to work. It would ultimately destroy the

speculator in land values, who is simply a parasite upon society.

“Please accept the enclosed copy of *Progress and Poverty*. Its author seems to me perhaps the greatest of modern prophets.”

* * * * *

The early winter of 1913 Mr. Fels spent in England. There was much on his mind. The Liberal Government had imprisoned Mr. Lansbury, and the hunger strike had naturally not been without its effect on the latter's health. Joseph decided to leave for America and persuaded Mr. Lansbury to accompany us. We left England on December 3rd. Little was done in America until midway in January, when the fourth Conference of the Fels Commission was held in Washington. The Conference was in a happy mood. “We meet,” announced Mr. Kiefer, the Chairman of the Commission, “for the first time in the history of the movement with Single Tax on the statute-book of two States of the Union.” Real advances had been made in Texas and Colorado, and—even more significant—in Pennsylvania and New York.

The Conference had much business to transact, but Joseph took very little part in its discussions. So quiet and subdued was he that some delegates were actually unaware of his presence, until he

was pointed out to them. His attitude was remarkably composed. There was about him a sense of repose, very rare in him, and this seemed dimly to be reflected over the Conference. When he did speak, it was of his eagerness to live to carry on his work; yet he urged that his hopes were now secure, and that he was certain of the confirmation of his efforts. He told his friends that the great thing was an insistence on the spirit of society. "You are to look on its institutions as an expression of its soul," he asserted, "you are to make that soul manifest in all you think, and feel, and do." Once there came a flash of the old fighting spirit when Mr. Gompers, the president of the American Federation of Labour, spoke of the strength of the protected interests in America. "At this juncture," says the official report, "Mr. Fels presented Mr. Gompers with a leather-bound copy of *Progress and Poverty*, the book costing 48 cents in England and 70 cents in the United States, an object lesson in Free Trade." But, for the rest, his friends noticed and wondered at that strange calm.

He returned to Philadelphia at the close of the Conference, staying, as in the last few years he had always stayed, with two very dear friends, Mr. and Mrs. Earl Barnes. He was very occupied with business affairs, and grew more and more tired and

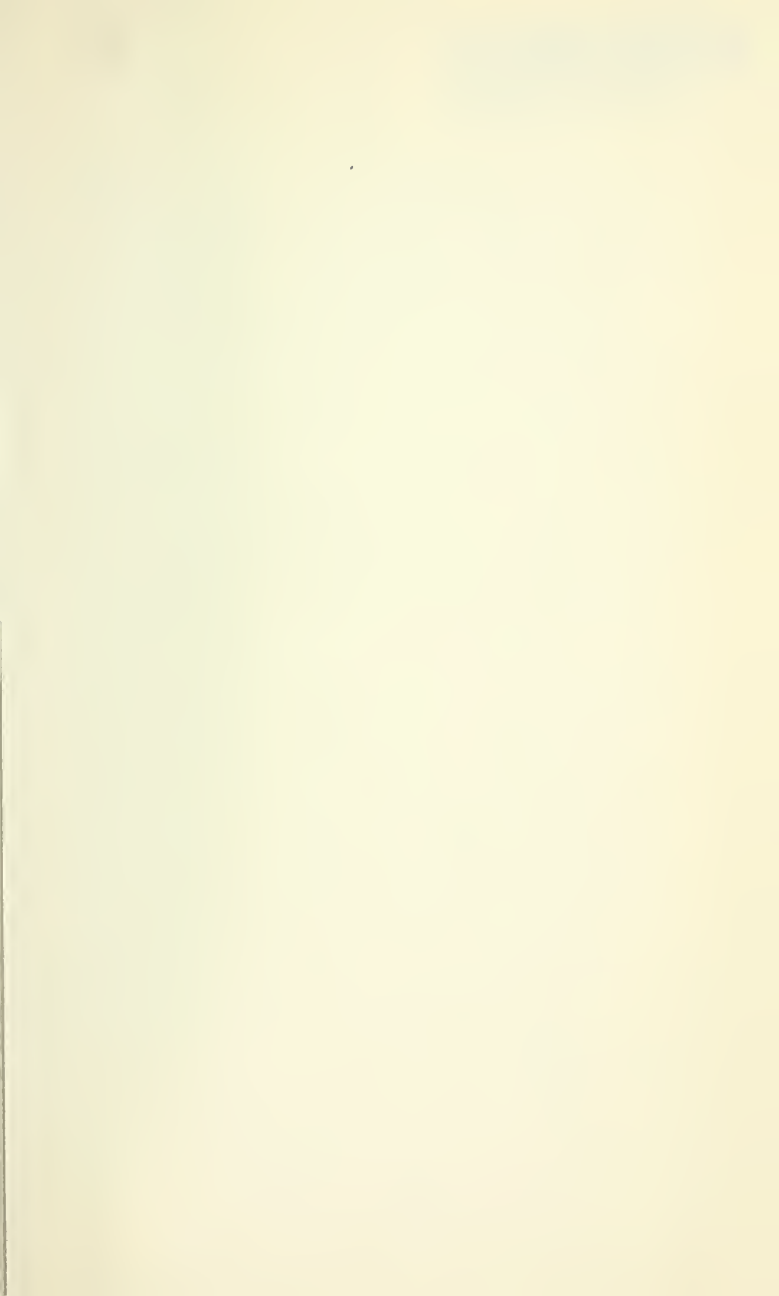
depressed. But there seemed no premonition of serious illness.

By the tenth of February, 1914, when the business affairs that had caused him anxiety were finally completed, he was evidently far from well. He suffered much from fever, and it was very difficult, as always, to persuade him to keep his mind from business matters. By the nineteenth, it was obvious that he was in serious danger from pneumonia. He fought splendidly against the enervation caused by the fever and talked much of his plans and hopes. On the twenty-first he seemed much better. But as the night progressed he grew rapidly worse, and it was obvious that his strength was nearly exhausted. It was his will alone that kept him alive. As I look back at the parting it is impressed upon me that, eager as he was to press forward the work, he had come to feel that may be his going might prove more helpful to the cause he had so deeply at heart; that perhaps his death would be a gift of life to the movement. Then he could face it fearlessly and gladly. Just as the first gleam of the sun heralded the day, he passed. It seemed right and splendid that he should go thus, fronting the dawn.

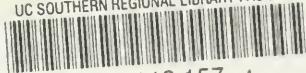
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